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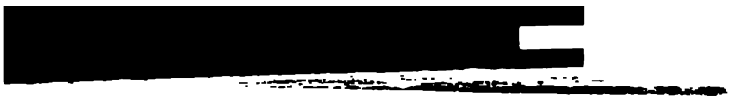
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AN INQUIRY

INTO THE

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

OF

SHAKSPERE.



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SHAKSPERE.

BY W. J. BIRCH, M.A.,

NEW INN HALL, OXON.

AUTHOR OF THE 'REAL AND THE IDEAL,' ETC., ETC.

Doubts have been entertained as to Shakspere's religious belief, because *few* or *no* notices of it occur in his works. This ought to be attributed to a *tender* and *delicate reserve* about holy things, rather than to inattention or neglect.—CHARLES KNIGHT.

LONDON:

C. MITCHELL, RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.

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PREFACE.

INQUIRIES into the Life of Shakspere, which have ended in the omission and restoration of a letter in his name, may be pleaded as an excuse for an inquiry into the religious character of the man from the monuments he has left behind him.

For the judgment of sentiment no fairer dictum has been laid down than that of Shaftesbury—'That is alone to be called a man's opinion, which is, of any other, the most habitual to him, and occurs upon most occasions.'

Of the possibility of drawing any inference as to the opinions of a person from his writings, we may add the authority of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton — 'In the mind of man there is always a resemblance to his works. His heroes may not be like himself, but they are like certain qualities which belong to him. The sentiments he utters are his at the moment; if you find them predominate in all his works, they predominate in his mind; if they are

advanced in one but contradicted in another, they still resemble their author, and betray the want of depth or of resolution in his mind. His works alone make not up a man's character, but they are the index to that living book.' — Sir E. B. Lytton's Student, vol. I., p. 9.

Hunter, in his Preface to his 'Illustrations,' and elsewhere, thinks that not only the mind and opinions, but the personal history of Shakspere may be derived from the criticism of his works. W. J. Fox, M.P., delivered Lectures on the Politics of Shakspere indicated in his plays.

We have endeavoured, therefore, in this inquiry, to decide upon Shakspere's opinions on religion from the majority of instances in which he has declared himself on one side of the question more than the other.

The question to which we offer a solution is the one raised by Mr. Knight, the most complimentary of Shakspere's editors. To speak with brevity our 'Inquiry' is into the truth of our motto.

It is not hidden from us how many enthusiastic admirers of Shakspere will be startled at our views, and, perhaps, reject them; but if they will do us the favour to examine first, we shall be content. Not less than they do we admire the versatility of Shakspere's powers—we rejoice at his genius, and are proud of the reputation he has added to the national character, but these very circumstances make the inquiry more interesting—what were the peculiarities of his philosophy and religion?

The author wishes to be considered merely as an inquirer, not as a censor. He desires not to judge Shakspere for his sentiments, but only to exhibit them. This, he trusts, he has done truly and impartially, without levity on the one side or bigotry on the other.

There was a time when this attempt might have been deemed injudicious, but now that Shakspere is enthroned in the hearts of the people, and at the head of the national, if not of European, literature, it may safely be adventured upon.

Much corroborative evidence of the correctness of the views delineated in this work had been prepared, but is withheld on account of the great size to which it would swell the book, and from a conviction that the internal evidence from Shakspere's writings, presented in the 'Inquiry,' is the fairest umpire to appeal to, and amply sufficient for the purpose.

As an explanation of any typographical or other errors, it must be mentioned, that the author resided in the country while composing the work, and during its progress through the press.



SHAKSPERE, HIS TIMES AND ASSOCIATES.

It is not unlikely that the fictitious Unknown, to whom Shakspere addresses his Sonnets, was intended to represent the world to whom he prophesied of himself—of the oblivion of his life, and fate of his works. Hence his prediction—Sonnet lxxiv.—

> My life hath in this line some interest,
> Which for memorial still with thee shall stay.
>
> The earth can have but earth, which is his due,
> My spirit is thine, the better part of me.

Of his person in comparison with his poetry, he adds—

> The worth of that, is that which it contains;
> And that is this, and this with thee remains.

Therefore his 'spirit,' the 'better part of him,' his philosophy and religion, we are justified in tracing from his writings.

In all ages, and among all people, a man's company has been held as a criterion of his tastes and sentiments.

A saying of antiquity, '*Noscitur a sociis*,' has become an English proverb—a man is known by his friends. The French to the same effect, is still more expressive of the certainty which a knowledge of a man's acquaintances gives in deciding his character.—'*Dis moi qui tu hantes, je dirai qui tu es.*' Tell me the society you frequent, I will tell you what you are. Marlowe was the precursor of Shakspere—according to Phillips he was another Shakspere. Of those dramatists who went before Shakspere he certainly came nearest to him, not only in point of time but in point of genius. According to Anthony Wood, Marlowe was a professor of Atheism, and writer of several discourses against the Christian religion. Marlowe was born but a few years before

Shakspere, and died in 1593. Shakspere was sharer in a theatre in 1589, for which Marlowe and the other dramatists of the age wrote. It is supposed by some that Shakspere is mentioned by Greene, as writing at that time in conjunction with them. It is therefore probable that as an actor, dramatist, and proprietor, both for purposes of business, pleasure, and instruction, Shakspere frequented the society of Marlowe and his friends. There is reason to think that his first manner, his early style, and young impressions, were received from Marlowe. There was his school, and Marlowe was his master.

There are few if any personal notices of others to be met with in Shakspere so certain as the reference to Marlowe. The rare exception he has made in introducing the mention of him in his works, speaks much as to his regard for Marlowe's memory. The way in which he mentions him and his 'mighty line'—

> Dead shepherd! now I find thy saw of might,
> 'Whoever loved, that loved not at first sight?'

we think an additional tribute of esteem; quoting what he said as true, mighty, and engraven in his recollection. The expression, 'Dead shepherd,' looks as though the leader of the flock was pointed to—it is the language of a poetical pupil to his mentor. Seldom, if ever, does Shakspere quote any other contemporary, or give any authority, which makes this compliment to the spirit of the dead of greater worth. So close has this connection between the two poets been considered, that the celebrated sonnet of Marlowe, 'Come, be my love,' was long attributed to Shakspere. One of Shakspere's plays, on the other hand, has been attributed to Marlowe. That when Shakspere first began to write he should be indebted to Marlowe shows congeniality of sentiment between them. This is verified by the accusation of Greene, that he did take from Marlowe. The memory of the predecessor goes down to posterity as identified with the memory of the successor. The same cannot be well said of any other than Marlowe.

It is probable that the other contemporaries of Marlowe shared his opinions. Collier produces the fact of Marlowe

having been a propagandist. Greene confessed to have held the same opinions; and, in his exhortation to Marlowe to abandon them, referred to a teacher amongst them who died miserably, supposed to be Kett, a Fellow of Bennet College, Cambridge, who was burnt at Norwich for Atheism, in 1589. They were followers of Lucretius and Epicurus in philosophy, and they were Epicureans, unfortunately, in the modern sense of the word. They all died early from the effects of dissipation. Greene was taken ill, and died a month after a drunken feast with his friend Nash. The occasion of his death, and the duration of his illness, exactly coincide with the tradition which says that Shakspere died a month after drinking immoderately with Jonson. They were nearly all University men, and Shakspere may have derived much of his learning, philosophy and idiosyncracies, from his acquaintance with them.

Shakspere became known to the Stage when there was a fierce contention between the rhyming dramatists and the writers of blank verse. Marlowe was of the new school, and Shakspere followed him; for which they both obtained much obloquy. It has been remarked, by Leigh Hunt and Barry Cornwall, that there are evidences of the imitation of Marlowe in Shakspere's works. His style throughout is more conformable to Marlowe's than to Beaumont's Fletcher's, Jonson's, or Massinger's. This, doubtless, arose from the force of association with Marlowe in his early days. From the accusation that Marlowe indulged too much in the portraiture of lust, villany, and ferocity, Shakspere is not exempt. There are instances of it in other plays besides Titus Andronicus. Shakspere treated religion with less respect even than Marlowe. He introduced obscenity, and went beyond him in profanity.

We know very little of the personal history of Beaumont and Fletcher. Chalmers' Biographical Dictionary says of Beaumont, 'How his life was spent, and how his mind was occupied, his works show * * * his short span cannot be supposed to have been diversified by any other events than those that are incident to candidates for theatrical fame and profit.' These observations may be received as generally applicable to the lives of all the dramatists. Of Fletcher, it

has been remarked, that 'it would not have been supposed he was the son of a bishop.' Jonson, thrown into prison for killing a man in a duel, said that he took his religion on trust from a Roman Catholic priest, who was in confinement with him, in which persuasion he remained for fourteen years. At the end of this time, it is not likely that a man of such easy faith would be troubled to distinguish for himself a creed; and, unless some new companion obliged him with one, (of which he has left us no notice) it is probable that he spent the remainder of his days religionless. A bishop who visited him in his dying days, relates that he found him—'twixt wine and women, but that Jonson assured him he was sorry for the profanity of his works, especially for having ridiculed the Scriptures—a sorrow that all who have examined the writings of Jonson and Shakspere, will allow to be becoming in a greater degree, in the mouth of the latter dramatist.

Massinger did not begin to write till Shakspere had retired from the Stage. Gifford, the editor of his works, says, 'though we are ignorant of every circumstance respecting Massinger, unless that he lived, wrote, and died, we may yet form to ourselves some idea of his personal character from the incidental hints scattered through his works.' Thus we have the dictum of this great critic, that a writer's character and opinions may be drawn from his plays; and he himself infers the religious sentiments of Massinger from comparison with the other dramatists. He observes that, 'The great distinction of Massinger, is the uniform respect with which he treats religion and its ministers, in an age when it was found necessary to add regulation to regulation to stop the growth of impiety on the stage. No priests are introduced by him, "to set on some quantity of barren spectators" to laugh at their licentious follies; the sacred name is not lightly invoked, nor daringly sported with; nor is Scripture profaned by buffoon allusions lavishly, put into the mouths of fools and women.' In Shakspere the uniformity is the other way.

Gifford, in these remarks, evidently had Shakspere in view. As he only excepts Massinger for his religious propriety, among the dramatists of that age, we have the authority of a critic, best able to know it, that at least Shakspere

was among those who indulged in reprehensible licences. But we will here extract from another writer, (the author of the life of Shakspere in Lardner's Cyclopædia) as to the irreligion of Shakspere. The cyclopædiast says, 'We may add, that his (Shakspere's) allusions in other respects, are in the highest degree censurable. As a late admirable writer (Gifford) has said of him, he "is in truth, the Coryphæus of profanation." Texts of Scripture are adduced by him with the most wanton levity; and, like his own Hal, he has led to "damnable iteration." As Ben Jonson, so we hope Shakspear, repented of his profaneness; though assuredly, in the latter case, no record of repentance is to be found on earth.' Gifford and Johnson are both eminent critics, and they both have expressed themselves most decidedly in reference to the irreligion of Shakspere. Their condemnation may be set in opposition to our motto from Mr. Knight, who has argued the opposite way.

Other critics have collected notices of Raleigh, and what they think friendly allusions to him and his position, in the plays of Shakspere. Whatever his life and works may testify, it was a current opinion of his age that Raleigh was an Atheist. Chalmers' Bio. Dict. art. Raleigh: says, 'In 1593 he was charged with Atheism in a pamphlet by the Jesuit Parsons, who speaks of his School of Atheism, of which he was not content to be a disciple, but was a doctor. Anthony Wood not only adopts this opinion of his principles, but tells us from whom he derived them. Shakspere is known to have had private and personal intercourse with Raleigh. Raleigh was at the head of a club at the Mermaid, where Jonson and Shakspere were the most distinguished members. 'There,' says Fletcher, 'they drank "full wine."'

It is just possible that Shakspere in early life knew Bacon. The versatile Chancellor must have been once theatrical, as in the winter of 1586—7, he was concerned in getting up and writing parts of a new play which was acted before the Queen by the members of the Temple. It is highly probable that Shakspere was acquainted with his works, or the spirit of his investigations, as there is evidence in Shakspere of some coincidence with them. Much of Bacon's Essays are said to be taken from Montaigne, whose writings were

well known to, if not much used by, Shakspere. The design of both Montaigne and Bacon seems to be, to find out what may be said on each side of the question of religion. This style of writing is too much in the fashion of the schoolmen, who would argue on any hypothesis, for or against, and was probably adopted by Montaigne and Bacon as a just medium; as eclectic in philosophy, and as avoiding the imputation of holding any opinions, heretical in themselves, or obnoxious to others. Bacon has taken care to balance his sentiments, whilst those of Shakspere seem nearly all placed in one, so as greatly to outweigh the other scale. Bacon, as well as Montaigne, was at least aware that his Essays would be thought by some prejudicial to religion; as he says, in his prefatory epistle to his brother, 'I find nothing, to my understanding, in them contrary or infectious to the state in religion or manners, but rather, as I suppose, medicinable.' Bacon gave a first edition of his Essays in 1597, another in 1612. Though published after many of the plays of Shakspere, they evince the spirit of the age amongst literary men contemporary with Shakspere. In his third Essay, 'of unity in religion,' Bacon says of the religion of the heathens, 'you may imagine what kind of faith theirs was, when the chief doctors and fathers of their church were the poets.' An idea which Shakspere seems to have had, in the speech of Theseus in the Midsummer Night's Dream, where he puts into the mouth of that hero of ancient Athens, that the religious, the lunatic and the poet, are of imagination all compact. Agreeing further with Shakspere, he says, 'the differences in religion make the religious to be thought mad, and the Atheists and profane to sit down in the chair of the scorner.'

It seems, according to Bacon, that Atheists were then very rampant, for he says that they were ever talking of their opinions; that they strove to get disciples, and, most of all, would suffer for Atheism rather than recant. He must have been thinking of Kett, Marlowe, and the dramatists, or Raleigh and his school, as we know of no other Atheists in those times, or of any others who had Atheism ascribed to them in England. Bruno, who had been in England, under the patronage of Sir Philip Sydney, was burnt abroad.

Bacon says one cause of Atheism is the scandal of priests, which had already operated in producing the Reformation, and its next step, infidelity. The writings of the Italians, such as Boccaccio's, which Shakspere consulted, made the scandal of the priesthood the subjects of their pen, for the purpose of producing in others the infidelity which already existed in themselves. Another cause, he says, 'is a custom of profane scoffing in holy matters, which doth by little and little deface the reverence of religion.' Shakspere was certainly amenable to this, as a producer of Atheism.

Bacon remarks, 'They that deny a god, destroy a man's nobility; for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body: and, if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature.' We shall often have occasion to remark, in the examination of Shakspere's plays, the tendency he shows to depreciate the theological estimation of man, and compare him rather to the beast by his qualities in common with the animal, than to a god, by the great and many differences of his nature and superiority over the lower animals. Besides, he draws comparisons, between man and the nature he imputes to supreme beings, derogatory of all divinity.

There were three parties into which the men of those times were divided—the popish, the puritanical, the irreligious or sceptical. Marlowe belonged to the last for certain; and nearly all the dramatists may be said to have belonged to it. Raleigh had the reputation of being a member of it; but along with Bacon and other statesmen, whilst indulging in speculative opinions, they would consider religion as a matter of policy. Whilst the puritanical party were suffering imprisonment and death, they accused the authorities of granting illegal impunity to all the pleasures of the people in the theatrical quarter on Sundays; doubtlessly done by the authorities in order to neutralise, by amusement, the effects of religious propagandism, and the melancholy sourness of spirit which Shakspere accuses the Puritans of introducing into society, and which had its political consequences. James the First is especially charged with favouring the Roman Catholics from feeling more affection towards their principles, and out of hatred to Puri-

tanism; which, he said, preferred the pains and penalties of this life, and consigned all but themselves to hell in the next world; an opinion which gained for them from Shakspere the character of madmen, 'stocking hell with more devils than its vastness could hold.' This exclusiveness of spirit they carried into practice when they came into power.

The Brownists, the prevalent sect of Puritans in Shakspere's time, were the precursors of the triumphant independents of the commonwealth. It was, however, when Shakspere wrote, of the worst party to be; however dangerous, on the other hand, it might be to set up as a politician. 'I had as lief be a Brownist as a politician,' says Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Indeed, the humanity of Shakspere might feel for the persecuted, and hold in abhorrence the politician who was the persecutor, instead of being, as the enlightened rulers of the day were disposed to be, merely the counteractors. It might appear to him as bad to act according to political expediency as to be one of its victims, though, as the enemies of the theatre and as distasteful to him, he was engaged in satirising them. Whatever inference he wished to be drawn from it by mention of their name, their hanging on the gallows would strongly impress Shakspere. The spectacle of Brownists amongst the Protestants, of Papists suffering capital punishment for opinion's sake, alternately presented to the eyes of the public, would create a party hostile to all religion, whilst an occasional Atheist burnt would teach the irreligious to keep their opinions to themselves, or caution them in administering infidelity as 'medicinable.' Such a physician in opinion we think was Shakspere (no politician, like Bacon); he exceeded in quantity and quality the doses which many modern practitioners, suspected of free-thinking, have dared to prescribe to their patients.

It has been observed, that the changes which the families of Bacon and other statesmen (going from Popery to Protestantism, and *vice versa*, through all the shades of differences during the sixteenth century) must have naturally disposed their minds to scepticism. Shakspere's father was sent up as a recusant in 1592, for not attending church. Amidst the disputes whether it was from old age, poverty,

or being a Roman Catholic, people have forgotten to think whether it was not from holding the same opinions about religion as his son, who makes Glo'ster accuse Winchester, afterwards Beaufort, in Henry VI., that he had nothing to do with religion, for he never went to church: and Falstaff to say that he 'did not recollect when he had seen the inside of a church.'

The irreligious party at the end of the Tudor and beginning of the Stuart dynasty, must have formed the professed free-thinkers of the Commonwealth. Their names are given by Hume, in his History of England, as Deists, 'Who denied entirely the truth of revelation, and insinuated that all the various sects, so heated against each other, were alike founded in folly and in error. Martin, Challoner, Harrington, Sidney, Wildman, Nevil, were esteemed the heads of this small division. The Deists were perfectly hated by Cromwell, because he had no hold of enthusiasm by which he could govern or overreach them; he therefore treated them with great rigour and disdain, and usually denominated them the heathens.'

The Bacons and the Shaksperes, the philosophers and scoffers, as well as the Papists, were extinguished by the Puritans. The theatre gave way to the pulpit, the actor and dramatist to the preacher. The philosophical and political school of infidelity had no chance against the fanaticism of Cromwell at the head of the religious spirit of the age.

Next to the living, the dead who converse with the living, through the medium of books, are to be regarded as the society who form men's opinions. Critics have decided that Shakspere was acquainted with Lucretius, Plutarch, Aristophanes, Lucian, and others among the ancients who abounded in speculations on the nature of things and pleasantries on religion. If Shakspere did not derive his knowledge from the originals, he did from translations, and he would have been assisted by contemporary dramatists—university men, who must have been acquainted with the dead languages and ancient authors.

Among the moderns, he was certainly well acquainted with the two most irreligious authors known to his times.

He was well versed in Boccaccio, and was indebted to him for the stories of some of his plays. We owe to Italy the revival of literature, and, therefore, it is probable that whatever was contained in its writings would be re-echoed by those of other countries of Europe which succeeded it in letters.

Naudè, the librarian of Cardinal Mazarin, says of Boccaccio—'As to religion, I believe that Boccaccio had none, and that he was a perfect Atheist.'

Montaigne (a favourite writer with Shakspere) was sceptical, and speculative on the doctrines of religion. We think we have proved in one of the plays, the adoption of a passage from Montaigne, which would coincide with Shakspere's sentiments of a future state. Montaigne is said to ridicule the systems of divinity in his chapter upon Raimond de Sebonde.

Montaigne observes, that 'the weakness rather than strength of our judgment is our assistance in religion. The things that we are the most ignorant of are the most proper to be deified.' All which sentiments are embodied in the speech of Theseus, in the Midsummer Night's Dream. Though Pope says Shakspere was 'obliged to please the lowest of the people, and to keep the worst of company,' yet admitting this circumstance as a motive not to be religious, as producing an indulgence in coarse jokes, and the ridicule of sacred things, yet we must say that he tried to elevate the sentiments and morals of the people. However disinclined to the supernatural and liable to ridicule revelation, yet in the mention of them he will draw a moral congenial to his own opinions. He has a system which may be drawn from his works, which he contrasts with the notions of mankind taken from Revelation, and which he represents as doing what revelation and a future state proposes to do for the benefit of mankind, and which he seems to think sufficient to supply its place. The fear of the consequences of immorality he does not release men from, but strongly insists upon it; and, putting aside religious considerations, he has more than any author exalted the love of humanity. However he may indulge in invective against the artificial systems of religion, and be found even speak-

ing against Christianity, yet in his material and natural speculations he endeavours to give philosophical consolation to mankind, to inculcate submission to inevitable circumstances, and encourage scientific investigation into the nature of things.

But it cannot be contended that Shakspere did not inculculcate an indifference to a future state—and abstractedly deny it. Upon some of the abstruse metaphysical questions which he moots, his speculations may have fallen innoxious of effect, even if perceived by the common mind—but the questions of life and death must have come home to every bosom producing results which must have been obvious and intended.

The first dramatic representations in England were miracle plays. Craik's Sketches of the History of Literature and Learning in England tells us—'The subject of the miracle plays were all taken from the histories of the Old and New Testaments, or from the legends of Saints and Martyrs; and, indeed, it is probable that their original design was chiefly to instruct the people in religious knowledge.' The morals, or moral plays, succeeded, in which all the characters were allegorical. The vices and the virtues were impersonated. The devil of the miracles became the vice of the morals—though in character he was still introduced to undergo his tribulations, to the satisfaction of the audience in seeing the enemy of mankind always overcome. More especially the morals, but even the miracle plays, were written and represented down to the very end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century. Collier gives an account of Lupton's moral 'All for Money'—in the title called 'a moral and pitiful comedy;' in the prologue, 'a pleasant tragedy.' The catastrophe is sufficiently tragical. Judas, in the last scene, coming in (says the stage direction, 'like a damned soul in black, painted with flames of fire and a fearful vizard') followed by Dives, 'with such like apparel as Judas hath,' while Damnation (another of the *dramatis personæ*) pursuing them, drives them before him, and they pass away, 'making a pitiful noise,' into perdition.

What a transition to the plays of Shakspere, whilst these

miracle and moral plays were fresh in the recollection of the people, and might still be seen! These supernatural, historical, and allegorical personages, superseded by a material and philosophical explanation of things! We are inclined to think there was a lurking pleasantry at them in the Ghost of Hamlet; and as an early play of Shakspere, Hamlet was intended not only to be a moral and pitiful comedy, but a more pleasant tragedy than is now generally supposed.

The clowns, and Falstaff, *et hoc genus omne*, are exponents of the altered state of theatrical theology. Shakspere was foremost in leading the triumph over the old order of things. The transition is nowhere so marked as in his plays. Placed in circumstances of controversy, the spirit which it engenders of proceeding to extremities with the adversary may have disposed Shakspere to undress the miracles, and more especially the morals of the plays, and reduce them to the nakedness of nature, and the truth of history, which has gained for Shakspere, with some, not only the idea that he had no religion, but had 'no moral purpose' in his works.

The few facts and numerous traditions about Shakspere in early life, and the inferences to be drawn from them, may be said to afford arguments against the idea of a religious formation of character in the poet. But as a comparison between his life and works would extend to a larger field of inquiry than his philosophy and religion, we leave it to some future time, or other hand.

The writer of the life of Shakspere in Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopædia, says 'of Shakspere's moral character we know little. It might deserve all the praises bestowed upon it by modern writers; but there is greater probability in supposing that it was not wholly untainted by the vices of the period. On his honesty, or his justice, no censure has been passed even by tradition; but tradition does say he was not averse to the bottle, or to pursuits still more criminal.' But is there nothing in the works of this celebrated man to justify the suspicion of immorality?

Whoever has looked into the original editions of his dramas, will be disgusted with the obscenity of his allusions. They absolutely teem with the grossest impurities—more

gross by far than can be found in any contemporary dramatist. Whalley, indeed, speaks of his 'remarkable modesty,' but, as a modern critic (Gifford) observes, 'we shall be at a loss to discover it.' 'His offensive metaphors and allusions,' says another, (Steevens) 'are undoubtedly more frequent than those of all his predecessors or contemporaries.'

Barry Cornwall thinks the secret of Shakspere's extensive knowledge was in his heart—a nature which sympathised with all mankind. An admission that Shakspere is somewhere to be found in his characters; and we think we can show that he sympathised with those who had no religion, rather than those who had; with infidelity rather than belief. In speaking of the benefits Shakspere conferred upon his country, Barry Cornwall says, 'If Bacon educated the reason, Shakspere educated the heart;' and of the moral effects of his writings, he mentions the 'extensive charity' which he inculcated.

We cannot but believe that Shakspere spoke from the heart when, in the speech of the Duke, in Measure for Measure, he so eloquently painted the calamities of life, and made death preferable as the end of existence. It is said that he wrote it when midway between thirty and forty, the prime of life, when he could not have fully tasted of all its afflictions, when his age should have counteracted their force, and when there was such a remainder of hope. Of the same time of life, or younger, is the spokesman. We have every reason to suppose, therefore, that he delivered those sentiments in that speech, and so many similar to them elsewhere, from the heart, as well as all those philosophical speculations of his own, and satires upon the received opinions of others.

Barry Cornwall says of his sonnets—'As one travels through these records of the great poet's feelings, a dim and shadowy history seems to rise and disclose itself before us; an intimation not to be neglected; seeing that such a man, however entangled amongst the conceits and fancies of his age, would hardly, in his own person, have wasted such sad and passionate verses on any subject that had no foundation in truth.'

Shakspere, different from the rest of his brother drama-

tists, did not die in harness; we hear of him in his retirement at Stratford-upon-Avon. There, if anywhere, in the country, a provincial town, apart from his profession, and friends, and from metropolitan influences, he might have retired, like the Duke in As You Like It, put on a religious life, 'and thrown into neglect' the pomps and vanities of this world. It is related of him that he was accustomed to pass his hours of conviviality at Stratford, with one Mr. Combe, who was a usurer in the town, and on one occasion asked him to write his epitaph, which Shakspere gave in the following words:—

> Ten in the hundred lies here engraved,
> 'Tis a hundred to ten his soul is not saved.
> If any one asks who lies in this tomb?
> Oh, oh! quoth the Devil, 'tis my John à Combe.

It is said that the satire was so severely felt, that Mr. Combe never forgave it; therefore some commentators object to its authenticity, as not likely to proceed from a man of so much good nature as Shakspere. But the hypothesis of Shakspere's general incredulity is his best apology, and acquits him of anything more serious than heretical levity.

Collier throws a doubt on this being Shakspere's; but it being attributed to him, shows an appropriateness of the sentiment to the man.

It is traditioned very strongly that Shakspere died through the effects of a three days' conviviality with some brother bards. There is no improbability in this, such indulgences were common in those days, and in all times. Many of our poets have been guilty of similar excesses.

Shakspere was buried on the 25th of April, 1616. He states in his will, dated the 25th of March, 1616, only a month before, that he was in perfect health and memory. It is therefore probable that he died suddenly, though it may be said the words are a mere formula to state that he was in a condition of mind and body to make a will.

'In the name of God, Amen. I, William Shakspere, of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, gent., in perfect health and memory, (God be praised!) do make and ordain this my last will and testament, in manner and form

following; that is to say: First, I commend my soul into the hands of God, my creator, hoping, and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus Christ, my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting; and my body to the earth whereof it is made.'

We notice this document, because some may regard it as an evidence of faith sufficiently conclusive to contradict the tenor of our conclusions from his works.

This will is not in Shakspere's handwriting, the signature only is his. It is acknowledged to be a strictly legal document, in a form common to those days, and not unfrequently used now, which proves the more that it was the form of the lawyer employed to draw it up. Knight's Penny Magazine, new series, No. 2, p. 16, says, 'The last wills of our ancestors used invariably to begin "In the name of God," etc. It was remarked as a novelty, that the will of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, who died in 1744, (128 years after Shakspere's death) had not the usual preface.' Shakspere would have been the last man to scruple about a form. Hundreds of unbelievers in these days take the same course of custom for security. Voltaire, at a later period, went so far as to take the Sacraments, and make a confession of faith, to obtain the rites of burial.

Again, the practices of the age of Shakspere would make little of adopting such a will as a matter of policy. Everyone was then subject to penal inflictions for not attending divine service of the Established Church, whilst open dissent was punished with the gallows. The English of the sixteenth century had continually to change their faiths to save their lives. It is not till lately, if ever, that a point of conscience has been made of professions of faith by sceptics. Gibbon sat in parliament qualified by an oath that negatived his principles—and Hume, in similar matters and socially, was all things to all men.

A forged will of Shakspere has been produced by the Catholics; and Protestants have represented him, without success, as being their champion. Whose advocate he was we leave these pages to decide. The epitaph on his tomb, whilst it begs that his body be not disturbed, makes no reference to a future state. The author of Shakspere's life in

Lardner, calls it a 'strange inscription.' It has the levity in serious matters, and ironical imprecation usual to Shakspere.

> Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
> To dig the dust enclosed here.
> Blest be the man that spares these stones,
> And curst be he that moves my bones.

The humour which imagined the death scene of Falstaff, and so often found in the plays an occasion for mirth, even in the mournfulness of the grave, would, in the spirit of his own Biron, move to laughter the veriest misery of mankind; and did, it seems, convert into comedy the concluding tragic business of his own exit from the stage of real life. How can the discoverer of the reverential spirit in Shakspere, and of assurances of heavenly immortality in his works—how can the pious, who seek to the last a sign of faith in the promises of heaven, as those around the death-bed of Cardinal Beaufort—how can these reconcile the jesting of the profane old man with every 'good friend' come to pay the 'holy and obsequious tear' of 'dear religious love' over his earthly remains? Shakspere's opinion of his body, of his opinions and his writings, was declared in the sonnet before quoted, where he apparently denies the redemption:—

> But be contented: when that fell arrest,
> Without all bail, shall carry me away.

We have therefore every *à priori* argument to suppose from his life what we have to confirm in the *à posteriori* examination of his works, that the tendency of Shakspere's philosophy, (in which he abstractedly, according to Hallam, excelled all other dramatic poets) and his *views of religion*, were of a sceptical tendency. Such being the true and living character of the man.

EPITOME OF THE INQUIRY.

> This is a poor epitome of yours,
> Which by the interpretation of full time
> May shew like all yourself.
>
> CORIOLANUS.

SHAKSPERE taken piecemeal will ever share the common fate of versatile delineators of character—be quoted by the most opposite parties in favour of the most opposite views. The diversity of opinion among modern critics, respecting his philosophy and religious sentiments, is only to be harmonised by studying him as a whole. That this may be readily done, this epitome of the facts and arguments adduced in the essays upon the plays, has been drawn up. It is only under the influence of a broad induction that Shakspere can be read in a spirit free from conventional prepossession, and sectarian narrowness.

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

The earliest and most recent critics, Meres, and now Collier and Ulrici, allow this play to be one of Shakspere's juvenile efforts. Our 'Inquiry,' also, reveals so many points of similarity between this and Shakspere's other dramas, that Titus Andronicus must take its place among his undoubted performances.

The revolting cruelties of this play originate in a point of religion. This point is attacked by outraged human affections. The appeal of the affections is disregarded—hence ensues the retribution of the drama. Humanity is opposed to piety, and humanity is vindicated. This is Shaksperian.

Aaron is a man of ambition, of talent, and courage, and seems goaded to desperation by the contumely which his being a black subjected him to. Yet fiendish as he is, our poet has adorned him with strong fatherly affections. The inference intended seems to be, that in better company he

would have been a better man. There is a strong resemblance to Shylock in his character and language.

Tamora is a painful character, yet she once was amiable. Like Portia and Isabella, our dramatist makes her plead for mercy. It is not till her affections sustain a deadly blight, that she becomes a wretch.

The madness of Titus has often been compared to Lear's. Aaron speaks of Tamora in the language of Romeo and Othello. She is his substitute for heaven. Titus and Marcus are quite Shaksperian upon death; they both regard it as an 'eternal sleep.' Titus utters the sentiments of scepticism in distress, to be found on so many occasions in Shakspere. Aaron speaks as Richard III. The speech of Saturnine, before the palace, parallels with a scene in Cymbeline. Aaron on the gallows adjures vengeance like Iago. Indeed, numerous are the points of identity between Titus Andronicus and the general dramas of Shakspere.

The atheism of this play is admitted on all hands. Aaron avows it openly. All the characters, especially the Andronici, rival him. But Lucius, the religious, is as brutal as the rest. He is the earliest and the latest, brutal. Another tragedy is wanting to avenge his atrocities. All being criminal alike, evidently no preponderance is assumed for the moralising influence of religion.

In a French work, entitled 'Observations on a Comedy of Molière, Le Festin de Pierre, Paris, 1665,' are sentiments equally applicable to Shakspere's Andronicus. It will be seen that the French critic did not think that the characters exempted the writer from responsibility. Molière is made to answer for it.

'Molière has made atheism mount upon the theatre. * * Molière cannot parry the just reproach that one can make against him of having given to the whole of his audience ideas of atheism, without having taken the care to efface the impressions of it. Molière renders the majesty of God the mock of a master and valet of a theatre; of an atheist, who laughs at it, and of a valet more impious than his master, who makes others laugh at it. In this piece, which has made so much noise, an atheist destroyed in appearance, destroys in effect and overturns all the foundations of religion.' Is

not this the character of Aaron, in 'Titus Andronicus,' with the difference that instead of raillery, the atheist of Shakspere speaks with the bitterest invective against God? Instead of a valet to support him, he makes the more just and pious join in the impiety of Aaron, and represents religion in an odious light, as the cause of all the evil. Nearly all the comic characters of Shakspere are Don Juans in levity, and all the clowns play the same part as the valet of Molière.

To assist in the correct understanding of the probable views of our poet, we have quoted the opinions of Posidonius on Epicurus—have given an extract from the Festin de Pierre of Molière—the cases of Eschylus, Euripides, Haguet, and the criticism of Voet on the author of 'Cymbalum mundi.'

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

The peculiar moral economy which characterises this performance identifies it as Shakspere's. A limitless charity, which nothing disturbs, eschews the idea of punishment, and includes in a general amnesty all offenders, great and small. The writer proceeds as though oblivious of any divine dispensation, in which the work of judgment is so differently regulated.

PERICLES.

This performance is not without touches of piety, but while the declamation is given to heaven the argument is given against it, which will be found a general rule with Shakspere.

In this play we have Cleon supposing 'heaven' at least capable of slumbering while human creatures want. This doubt of heaven's aid in distress is negatively confirmed in practice, as no petition is put up to heaven to avert it. Indeed, when Pericles appears with help, the Gods are invoked on his behalf; but why were they not asked to assist the Tharsians? It would be natural to a religious author to ascribe the arrival of Pericles to the act of the Gods, but this is not even thought of. Negative evidence is often conclusive, and an author's sentiments may sometimes be as well determined by what he omits, as by what he mentions.

Pericles thanks 'fortune' for the recovery of his armour, but he rides to court without saying a word to heaven for his delivery from shipwreck. This thoughtless impiety more than counterbalances the ejaculatory religion.

The Prince's invocation to God to still the storm, in the third Act, would pass for piety did he not jumble God and Lucina together. But we have cited a sufficient sample of the play. To the end of it ludicrous junctions are presented. Pericles 'blesses pure Diana' for the restoration of Thaisa, although better piety has been found in his mouth. When Thaisa informs him her father is dead, he prays—'Heavens, make a *star* of him!'

THE FIRST PART OF KING HENRY VI.

This play opens with a base admixture of astrology and divinity. We have one of the highest ministers of religion drawn as an infidel would draw him. He has no redeeming quality, and is continually engaged in the most unseemly quarrels—the representations of which cannot fail to beget a contempt for his profession. In his character, disbelief is furnished with an armoury of reproaches. This spectacle is indeed attempted to be reproved, but it is done so feebly that instead of serving as a moral, it is a foil to set off the deformity. Probably the scene of Talbot over the dying Salisbury is an example of comedy in piety without a parallel. This play presents more than one instance of materialism in death. The characters are occasionally religious —even Talbot thinks of his God at court (Act 3, Scene 4), but they are religious to little purpose; it neither mitigates their ferocity, nor counterbalances their profanity. Strange freedoms in this play are taken with Scripture story.

THE SECOND PART OF KING HENRY VI.

In the last play we found Henry a child by nature; in this, he is kept a child by religion. On his first introduction to Margaret, a high-spirited woman, he plays the part of a Methodist parson. The contrast between the sainted king and his lofty-minded queen is unmistakable. The absence, on the part of Henry, of all those qualities by which advancement in this world is to be secured, or even dignity

preserved; the obliteration of all manliness, is ascribed by the Queen, in indignant language, to his habits of piety—telling against religion with a force that no art can conceal, no ingenuity evade, no rhetoric explain away. Her bitter description of Henry's religious studies and pursuits, forms one of the most finished disparagements of piety of life to be found among infidel authors.

It may appear that Margaret's own intrigues and dark proceedings render her no advantageous contrast to Henry. But it must not be overlooked that her confessions to Suffolk teach us, that she was goaded to extreme measures by the pusillanimity of the king. Her behaviour at the battle of St. Alban's exhibits a natural nobility of soul, that warrants the fine portrait Sir Walter Scott has drawn of her in his 'Anne of Geierstein.' As Shakspere himself puts her in this relief, he must have intended to disparage the character of Henry, whom he represents as the example of a really pious king, from whose mouth perpetually drops the language of Scripture.

This play exhibits the former coarse impiety, the same levity in taking God's name in vain, the same execrable oaths. Few speak in this play who do not contrive to point their wit with sacred allusions.

We have also a 'ludicrous episode' on miracles, which, in the most lenient point of view, must tend to undermine the popular credence in the evidence on which those in sacred writ rest. Two perversions of history occur in this play, both on the side of scepticism.

It is worthy of remark, that Shakspere is confessed to have anticipated the phrenologists respecting the phenomena of dreams—they basing their theory of 'spectral illusions' on the materialism of their science.

THE THIRD PART OF KING HENRY VI.

Coarse profanity, the characteristics of the two former plays, is also the garniture of this.

In these performances our author manifests little more than his intention. The inconsistent jumble of materialism and religion denotes the novice in unbelief—rather the wish than the power to be effective in it.

The deaths of the chief heroes of these dramas are revolting. No devout Puritan of Shakspere's time could have more assurance of going to heaven, or being one of the elect, than is exhibited by these brutal and abandoned characters. It cannot but beget indifference to religious discipline, when such villains are given confidence in everlasting bliss.

The warmest partizan of Shakspere's faith must allow that the character of Henry, as drawn in these three Parts, is eminently calculated to bring piety into contempt. He is weak, credulous, vacillating, and cowardly—without dignity, and without sense. He neither preserves his station, nor his authority, nor governs his people. He is justly despised by his Queen for his want of spirit to preserve the rights of his child. Henry being so much of a religious automaton, is the cause of the bloody strife between the two roses. By proper vigour he might have nipped that contention in the bud, and saved his country from years of desolating civil war. His want of discretion cost him the loss of France; and he is pictured as standing by, repeating prayers, while his best friend, and the best nobleman of the age, is stifled in his bed. And at last Henry himself, without any profit from his religion, but a jest and a contempt to his nobles, is murdered by a deformed hypocrite. He who drew this character must have intended to insinuate, by a powerful example, the incompatibility of piety and manliness; or we must suppose him incapable of understanding either the force of words, or the force of character.

COMEDY OF ERRORS.

This performance being intended to amuse by situation, is little philosophical or speculative, but such allusions to religious matters as are found, are astonishingly daring.

The most pointed jests are upon the cross, the judgment day, and one of the parables of Christ. It may be all allowable diversion, but it is rather odd that our poet's diversion should frequently take this particular turn.

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

The evident tendency, if not specific object of this play, is to illustrate the potency of natural passion over spiritual

influences—to show that human desires are not to be bound by the letter of books, or tenor of oaths.

In doing this our poet displays the freedom before noticed, in borrowing from sacred sources. This, on the occasion, may be held as indispensable; as piety is the great opponent of the carnal man, and must be mixed up in an argument, such as the poet enters upon. But whether the precise turn he gives to what he thus borrows is either indispensable, or devout, we may safely leave to the judgment of the reader.

One of the finest passages of St. Paul, in general estimation, is appropriated to a secular purpose, and pointed with a heathen moral. The doctrine of necessity (a characteristic of our poet's philosophy) is often enforced in this play, and the inutility of oaths is attempted to be demonstrated on the ground of necessity.

If our author is held not to satirise certain Scriptural recommendations to men, it will not be disputed that he satirises Puritanical peculiarities. It will be said, in extenuation, that Shakspere set himself to attack only the abuses of religion, but it may be fearlessly urged that no truly 'reverential' man, as we are told Shakspere was, ever satirised the earnest faith of another; he may pronounce him to be in error, but he feels too much the solemnity of the question to write down sacred interpretations in burlesque.

Towards the end of the play, Biron's impious facetiousness is indulged to such an extent, that Shakspere is obliged to step in and act the part of his own censor, by way of allaying excited suspicion. In the mouth of Rosaline are put such rebukes of his religious freedoms, *à la* Voltaire, who intentionally trod on his readers' toes, and politely raised his hat to beg pardon for the offence, that we may be sure, were Shakspere to return to life now, no one would be more surprised than he at his commentators so lauding him for serious piety and unsuspicious philosophy.

HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK.

Had Shakspere never drawn but the character of Hamlet, as it now stands, and left all his other creations religious, he would have stamped himself as *once* a sceptic.

Hallam recognises in our author the 'censurer of mankind;' and it is not to be denied that he fulfils this office as the infidel, from time immemorial, has fulfilled it. But inasmuch as he tempers his satires with poetry and art, and garnishes them with philosophy, he has escaped the peculiar credit, which has fallen to the lot of others, who have essayed his functions.

The play of Hamlet combats the theory of Providence and the popular ideas of chance—subjects which seem always to have deeply engaged the attention of speculative freethinkers.

Shakspere's experience, as supposed by the judicious historian we have mentioned, and as corroborated by what we gather of his life and know of his plays, was precisely that which would produce a philosophical sceptic. It is this experience which he has embodied in Hamlet.

No theory of Shakspere reconciles so many contrarieties generally, as the one advanced in this 'Inquiry'—and it will be found that Hamlet is only intelligible upon the hypothesis maintained in the text—that of the Danish Prince being a sceptic.

We find that when Hamlet was produced before the Parisian public, in something like his true lineaments, this peculiarity was immediately recognised in him.

Those who are obliged to admit the freedom of Hamlet's speculations, will doubtless conclude that all is explained by what is termed the Prince's 'insanity.' But such should observe, that madness, like the creation of clowns in other plays, is the cloak wherewith our poet conceals his peculiar intention.

Could he be less than a sceptic who drew Hamlet with the weight of argument in his favour? His wit so pointed, his objections so subtle, his balances so determined. None could delineate such a character but he who understood it, and none would exalt it (as Shakspere does) but he who approved it.

Of Hamlet's scepticism, his famous soliloquy, beginning 'To be or not to be,' is a demonstrative proof. Nowhere in the whole range of literature are the *pros* and *cons* of life and death put with such perverse force. That there *may*

be an hereafter is the ancient position of the doubter. The Christian knows that there is a world to come. He is satisfied upon the point. He neither scruples, nor questions it. But Hamlet passes beyond mere doubt. He puts the moral disadvantages of the Christian belief. It 'makes calamity of so long life.' It makes us endure the 'proud man's contumely'—'the whips and scorns of time'—'the oppressor's wrong'—and a thousand evils which the brave would trample under foot. He pursues the disparaging comparison farther. 'It makes cowards of us all'—'resolution' loses its 'native hue,' and 'enterprise is turned away' at its fell glance. Nothing bolder than this has been written on this theme. Language can no further go in favour of disbelief. Let those who please claim Hamlet for a religious character, but great 'purification' must be again instituted before it can be done successfully, or consistently.

If the reader bestows but common attention upon the speeches and peculiarities of our prince and his companions, there will be little necessity to press further upon his notice the full summary of their characteristics in our epitome.

One instance may be cited, from among many, of the credit our author derives from our conjecture respecting his unbelief. Who can read, without startling, the cool, calculating diabolism of Hamlet, who waits for his uncle to rise from prayer before he kills him, that he may have a fairer chance of sending him to hell? Nothing but our hypothesis—that Shakspere was a disbeliever in this doctrine—saves 'gentle Willie' from being set down as the author of one of the most savage and shocking sentiments on record.

We find Polonius, in Hamlet, like the countess, in All's Well that Ends Well, amending the precepts of the New Testament. Not only are we struck with the little purpose for which the Ghost visits Hamlet, who neglects to ask him the very information for which he was panting, but at the comic strain in which the prince addresses the solemn visitant as 'Truepenny,'—the man of 'eternal blazons' as the 'fellow in the cellarage,' as the 'old mole.' No author, save Shakspere, would be retained in the niche of serious believers in the supernatural who had produced a scene of this kind.

The resurrection, or rather establishment, of Shakspere's present reputation, is entirely owing to the latitude that has been suffered to creep into the compositions of this age—the silence which is preserved by modern editors respecting the tenor of his religion and philosophy arises from a carelessness, or a weakness, it would be difficult appropriately to characterise.

RICHARD II.

Shakspere presents a somewhat fairer picture in this religious king than in the last he drew. But this character is not without strong suspicious traits.

Our exposition of this play cites some remarks of Mr. Knight, to the effect that Shakspere has been religionised by act of parliament—a fact powerfully significant of the poet's taste, when his works needed such a revision. It is said, by the critic in question, that the habits of the times of Shakspere sanctioned the use of impious freedoms. But we are not to forget that real piety is the same in all ages, and always avoids the 'light employment of the sacred name' of God. Mr. Knight appears to regret that 'modern editors have not exercised this good taste in restoring [rendering] the readings of the earliest copies' of our dramatist. If this is to be tolerated, then farewell to every hope of learning the individual character and sentiments of Shakspere. If we may omit every profane passage just as it suits our taste, and judge the author only by what we leave, or alter, of course we may transform him into an Apostle. By the exercise of the same 'good' and convenient 'taste,' we may make Toland into a Christian, Rabelais into a saint, and canonise Voltaire.

This play opens with a series of brutal invectives between Bolingbroke and Norfolk. These nobles, in their quarrel, make mutual appeals to heaven in the worst possible taste.

In adversity Richard resigns his religion. He had been told that heaven would championise his safety—he had boasted that the 'earth would feel' for him—that the very 'stones' would rise on his behalf—that neither the elements, nor man, could ever 'depose the deputy elected by the Lord'—but in the hour of danger he sits down 'to talk of

graves,' and takes a stern and deadly view of human affairs, such as alone befits the eye of an Atheist. In the fate of abandoned and murdered kings, the reality is made to break in upon him, and dissipate, as a delusion, the pious and confident hopes that before characterised him.

In Pomfret Castle, at the prospect of speedy death, we find him playing the finished sceptic, and building on the contradictions of the Bible an argument in favour of annihilation. On being murdered by Exton he evidences piety again, and directs his 'soul to mount on high;' but by what ratiocination he had so suddenly persuaded himself of his celestial prospects the poet who concludes by rhyme informs us not.

Comparisons between the sacrifice of the Son of God and mere mortals have always been held blasphemous. In this drama the reader will find such parallels unblushingly made between Jesus Christ and an 'oppressive' and unstable king.

In the speech of Gaunt, in Act 1, where he teaches Bolinbroke that 'there is no virtue like necessity,' we have an instance, of which this play affords several others, of Shakspere's partiality for that doctrine. It is curious that Warwick should teach it again to Bolingbroke, who became Henry IV.

RICHARD III.

Again our poet departs from historical truth, and in doing so, as before, he departs from religion. It has been recently established that Richard III. has been belied by historians. As Shakspere lived near to his time, it is likely that the truth was known to him; yet we find him making his hero more impious than the common histories warrant.

We see in this play, as in Macbeth, striking indications of our dramatist's peculiar philosophy, depreciating religious, raising moral influences—seeking in the constitution of human nature, rather than in grace, the inducements to virtue.

The author still reproduces his revolting groups of fierce and hateful disputants, contesting with each other the palm of malignity, and rivaling each other in invectives—with nothing in common save unanimous appeals to God to be

the minister of their curses, and to blast each other with his fearful vengeance.

Both in the folio and modern text of Richard III. parts have been omitted to preserve religious appearances. Mr. Knight confesses that one of Clarence's supplications, from the Redemption, was unnecessarily introduced. What then are we to say of the 'old odds and ends' by which Richard contemptuously characterises his cullings from holy writ, and the great variety of similar passages spread up and down the ancient and modern texts?

We have, in the scene between Queen Elizabeth and Queen Margaret, one of those fearful expressions of distrust in the interference of Providence, which shakes faith to its foundation, with the hand of a giant. Queen Elizabeth finds consolation in God, and argues his protection of her children. She exclaims—

> Wilt thou, O God, fly from such gentle lambs,
> And throw them in the entrails of the wolf?
> When didst thou sleep when such a deed was done?

To this eloquent, pious, and passionate appeal, Queen Margaret replies in words which crush all hope, and to which there is no answer. God *has* done it, argues Margaret—

> When holy Harry died and my sweet son!

Shakspere, in Macbeth and other plays, reproduces this fell logic.

It is usual with devout writers—indeed, with writers with little or no pretension to this character—to bring the villains of their stories to conscience-stricken death-beds, and appal, by the terrors of the last hour, the daring wickedness of a life. Far different with our author, who arms his villainous hero against the last assault of religious monitions. With 'hell' before his eyes, he resolves to brave it. There is not an example more questionable, in a religious point of view, nor a resolution more blasphemous on record.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

This fairy toy is not remarkable for grave speculation in philosophy, either of this life or the next. But that Shakspere should have given such themes any place, in such an

imaginative production as this, denotes his taste for these digressions.

The speech of Theseus, at the opening of the fifth act, is a curious combination of poetry and satire on religion. It is one of the best specimens to be found, in which our author is both delicate and ingenious in his scepticism. He remarks—

> Such tricks hath strong imagination;
> That if it would but apprehend some joy;
> It comprehends some bringer of that joy;

a passage evidently directed at the foundation of Natural Theology.

TAMING OF THE SHREW.

Religious levity is the striking feature of the small portion in any sense theological in this play. It has numerous examples of the violation of that command, 'thou shalt not take the name of God in vain.' Both Grumio and Gremio, as well as Petruchio, sin in this respect. These indecorous freedoms would not be tolerated in any living author. He would be denounced on all hands. Age, which makes all things venerable, seems to include impiety among its protegés.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

In the days of Shakspere dreams were held to be of supernatural origin. The celebrated dreams of holy writ had given sanctity to this phenomenon. Indeed, they are still regarded by metaphysicians, of the legitimate school, to be omens of the soul's immortality. It is not without surprise, therefore, that we find our poet, through the mouth of Mercutio, pronouncing 'dreams' as the

> ——— children of an idle brain,
> Begot of nothing, but vain phantasy.

We are also presented with the creation of a priest, of whom, to say the least, he is far more philosophical than religious—indeed, so much so, that the poet's tender critics are constrained to admit, he has drawn from 'nature's mysteries' in his delineation of the Friar.

Besides the Lucretian touches, in which our Friar indulges in his famous soliloquy, his morality is very conspicuous as being the morality of mere reason. In the perusal of this play we have to confess that desperate lovers may run to death without preparation, and quote Romeo and Juliet in their favour; and priests may omit the warnings of their office, and plead the Friar in their extenuation.

The Friar is the pure invention of the poet, yet Shakspere draws him, as all his priests, not suitably to their profession. Byron introduces an abbot in Manfred, and makes him religious, though no one supposes he participated in the sentiments which he thought it right to concede to the character. Whilst Shakspere makes Roman Catholic priests philosophers, he renders Church of England clergymen only ridiculous.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

Passages of the devoutest writers may be strained from their original purport, and applied by the irreligious to express their conceptions. But this play affords unmutilated and unforced speeches which have become the favourite quotations of bitter unbelievers.

The witticisms of this play are nearly all profane. An undisguised raillery is founded upon points of sacred writ. What dramatist, save Shakspere, ever represented the diffusion of the true knowledge of the gospel 'till it covers the earth as the waters cover the sea'—as tending to 'raise the price of pork,' by the proselytism of the Jews! Neither Rabelais nor Woolston have displayed more ingenuity in realising the ridiculous upon a serious subject than our poet has in this play. Upon what principle, therefore, we are to recognise in Shakspere a 'reverential mind,' and in others who fall below him in the same walk of wit, a professed disbelief, it is difficult to determine.

Shylock is a character that excites sympathy, while the Christians figuring in the play only awaken reprehension and disgust. Their scoffs, gibes, taunts, drive the friendless Jew to desperation, and foment the bad qualities he displays. With coarse brutality they triumph at his fall. And when robbed of his daughter, his fortune, and his life, Christianity,

which, like mercy, should have dropped as the gentle dew from heaven, is made still to assail him. Gratiano would sooner bring him to the gallows than show him favour, and he is hunted into the folds of the church, as though it were a den, and the poor, fallen, and trampled Jew, a wild beast. Surely Christians were never before set, by a Christian, in so execrable a light!

It may be urged that these men are not intended to illustrate the spirit, but the abuse of Christianity. Then why did not our poet indelibly mark this? Admitting that the abuse only is intended, who does not see the tendency of such an exhibition as we have? The commonest observer must be led to doubt the efficacy of that faith that exercised so little power over its believers. Shakspere, who could show morality all forgiving, even questionable in its charity, makes religion all persecuting.

Towards the end of the drama we find our author, restrained by no pious scruples, introducing as an illustration a fragment of Pantheism, such only as we should expect Michelet in our own day to be avowing, or the French University to be tolerating.

The scepticism of this play is of a bolder cast than Shakspere has before ventured upon, and if these dramas are a true indication of his mind, we, in the Merchant of Venice, can trace the progress of his disbelief. The character of Launcelot is one of more sustained profanation than before, and seems the commencement of a systematic course of raillery to be carried on by Falstaff and his crew, through the subsequent plays.

THE FIRST PART OF KING HENRY IV.

Knight, after reciting the several editions of this play, beginning in 1598 to the folio of 1623, which he has adopted, says, 'not a few of the expressions which were thought profane, especially some of the ejaculations of Falstaff, have in the folio been softened or expunged.' Thus went on what the Countess, in All's Well that Ends Well, calls a 'corruption,' the clown a 'purifying' of the text; continued by a Bowdler and a Knight to suit the times. But even now this play is eminently remarkable for open

and decided materialism, profane jests, and blasphemous expressions.

King Henry introduces himself by a mixed address of heathenism and scripture. That this passage contains—by the consent of critics—a text of sacred writ which few would suspect, may serve to illustrate the correctness of many of our inferences of a similar kind, which may otherwise look farfetched to those who have paid no distinct attention to this subject.

The holy resolution of Henry to proceed to the sepulchre of Christ is turned aside by an incursion of the Welsh. Predestination is employed to enforce the crusade to Jerusalem—soldiers were expressly ordained by God for the work,

> Whose arms were moulded in their mother's womb
> To chase these pagans, in those holy fields,
> Over whose acres walk'd those blessed feet,
> Which fourteen hundred years ago, were nail'd,
> For our advantage, on the bitter cross.

Yet the event never comes to pass, and predestination so solemnly sanctified goes for nothing.

Glendower's autobiography is modelled upon the life of Christ—Hotspur is all eagerness and honour. He tramples every consideration of religion under foot; he is invulnerable to every assault of supernaturalism, and Shakspere has to apologise for his 'unprofitable chat.'

What Hotspur is from passion, Falstaff is professionally. This voluptuous sinner is the hero of profanity. The fall of Adam, Pharoah's lean kine, Lazarus, Dives, the Prodigal Son—the sayings of Christ; grace, salvation, repentance, everlasting burnings, are his topics of merriment. He bids defiance to 'Monsieur Remorse,' and on the field of death refuses to pray. Let the partizan of Shakspere's seriousness spend half an hour with Falstaff!

THE SECOND PART OF KING HENRY IV.

This play is a fit companion to the Henries. Northumberland talks in a materialistic strain, which 'does him wrong,' says Travers. King Henry, in his night-gown speech, expatiates on the 'seeds' of Lucretius, and specu-

lates on nature after the manner of the author of the 'Vestiges.' The death of this king is made practically to illustrate the impotence of faith, and the prospect of an eternal world, in subduing the passions of the heart. We have a mixture of Christian allusions and blood-stained ambition—and the dying monarch delivers to his son the detestable maxims of a Machiavelli, who seems to have been well known to Shakspere. 'More he would' have added, had his strength permitted. He then prays, 'O God, forgive me'—those sins he was still prepared to augment, but that his 'lungs were wasted.'

Shallow jests over the grave. The reckless crew of the Boar's Head still distinguish themselves. The Prince, Poins, and Pistol, still continue their essays in profanity, and the sensual Knight remains their unholy exemplar. Not merely the details, but the essentials of Christianity are the themes of his flippancy. Perhaps in no other writings in the world are such melancholy and solemn subjects made perpetual topics of merriment, and their author not unanimously voted graceless and faithless.

KING JOHN.

This drama presents us with a weak and bloody king, who represents himself as 'God's agent'—with Constance, an injured and impious woman—with a bastard who proclaims gold, that 'breaks the pate of faith,' 'his Lord'—with King Philip, who, after the manner of Joshua, declares the 'sun will stay its course,' but in this case, to celebrate violated faith—and with Pandulph, a priest, who paints assassination as meritorious, and ridicules the popular idea of the interference of Providence in the affairs of men, ascribing it to the vulgar ignorance of mankind when they find 'tongues of heaven' in such events—an insidious but effective lesson of scepticism.

Elinor and Constance well illustrate the bias of our author. In the recriminations of women, and conflict of passion, we find the vein of his speculative philosophy.

The bastard declares 'old Time' to be the great arbiter of events. He is impious without disguise.

Constance, a woman, is the reverse of Claudio, in Mea-

sure for Measure. She persists in her choice of the 'end all' of death, and excludes any idea of immortality as she vows to kiss his (Death's) 'detestable bones,' with a cool and pointed nonchalance that no Christian writer could realise as Shakspere does. If he be not atheistic, no author not so, save he, ever so profoundly interpreted its aims.

In this play he reasons on the grave as Sir James Mackintosh does (in one of his philosophical aberrations), and on the signs of heaven, like Cicero.

The power of humanity over an oath, and a murderer's heart, as exhibited in the scene between Arthur and Hubert, is a pure specimen of Shaksperian morality.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

The foundation of this play proves to be a story taken from an infidel writer of the fourteenth century—Boccaccio. Our author adds to it a comic part, in which we are indulged with 'impertinent common-places.'

The Countess is made to venture an improvement upon the famous passive rules of the New Testament. She admonishes Bertram to—

> Love all, trust a few,
> Do wrong to none: be able for thine enemy
> Rather in power than use.

This is remarkable language. While 'love to all' is inculcated, a carefully guarded precept of self-defence is laid down, excluding that idea of non-resistance developed by the 'Son of Man.' Though this defence is to be 'rather in power than use,' yet are we to be 'able' for an 'enemy' in the time of need.

Helena is no less peculiar in her opinions. She says—

> Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie
> Which we ascribe to heaven.

She does not argue for the universality of this being the case, but her belief evidently lies in that direction. If less presumptuous, she is quite as incredulous as other of Shakspere's characters.

Is it not odd that our devout poet should be so forward to abridge the credit of heaven in the progress of human affairs,

teaching that in ourselves lies much of that help which is customarily ascribed to Providence?

It is upon a passage in this play (where the King speaks of Bertram's father) that Mr. Knight ventures his remarkable opinion upon Shakspere's 'reverential mind;' resting this character of our poet upon the *infrequency* of his use of 'scripture phraseology,' and his 'tender and delicate reserve about holy things.' Why, All's Well that Ends Well is alone a refutation of this baseless conjecture. Criticism has not another canon so untenable as this.

One of the lords, in the fourth act, lays down a theory of morality upon a principle of moral compensation, interwoven in the nature of things. The idea is a Utilitarian one.

Our clown is a worthy successor to Sir John Falstaff. He is conceded to be remarkable for 'biting satire,' which means, keen profanity.

KING HENRY V.

Our King is now a reformed rake, who has passed from the extreme of recklessness to the extreme of seriousness, until he is conceded to be 'superstitious.' It is the usual vice of ignorance thus to dwell on verges; and it is an unhappy fatality, to say the least of it, that our poet should thus represent his pious hero in a light always objectionable to the discreet portion of mankind. But in this religiousness he is not consistent. Johnson, who would be, from sympathy, favourable to him, complains that while 'he prays like a Christian, he swears like a heathen.'

The opening scene presents us with two archbishops, who regard the conversion of Henry as rendering him a fitted tool of the church, and proceed at once to prey upon him. Their plans place piety in an odious light. It is confessed that the poet borrowed this scene from Hall, 'a bitter hater of the priests.' Indeed, our reverential author borrowed from most suspicious sources.

Profane old Falstaff is again served up in Henry V., under the facetious soubriquet of 'fat meat.' By this time the 'boy' does honour to his tutors. Bardolph is a cool necessitarian. Pistol, as he appears here, proposes to 'bristle up,' as Falstaff is about to shake off this mortal coil. This

is death's dread lesson to him—he'll 'bristle up.' Mrs. Quickly re-names the Patriarch of Israel 'Arthur,' and lays it down, that greasy, unwieldy, old Jack, is in Abraham's bosom. Under Mrs. Quickly's ministrations Falstaff dies as he had lived: his last end is a continued jest, and he leaves, in the description of the event, a legacy of ridicule to his friends.

Besides borrowing from Hall, whom Knight compares to Hume in his hatred of priests, Shakspere puts into the mouth of Bardolph a sentiment, which has since been uttered by Burns and Shelley, and which, if we are to characterise it religiously, we must pronounce it one which no Christian could hear without a shudder.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

Since we have sciences which essay to predicate character from physiognomy, opinions from the formation of the brain, rules by which the light of hand writing is reflected over the sentiments, it surely must be possible to determine the man generally from his works, without requiring that he should arise, and in person avow himself, in face of the law, of public opinion, and his private interests. As You Like It affords abundance of evidence that Shakspere felt he should incur all these risks by a more explicit expression of his views, which is another corroboration that his views were not those of the orthodox standard.

If the conjecture of Hallam be correct, this play is reflective of our author, in those moments of silent contemplation when the secret thoughts find words. Accordingly we find him systematically wandering from 'trodden paths,' uttering, or anxious to utter, the 'invective which pierces through life'—'give him but leave to speak his mind, and he will cleanse the foul body of this infected world.' We cannot but be struck with the earnestness of this imploration; and when the 'fie! fie!' of society abashes the entreater, he exclaims, with the simplicity of genuine honesty, 'Why, what would I do but good?' Hereby 'hangs a tale,' if our too conventional critics would allow themselves to read it.

Jaques is the philosopher of the play, and the chief moralist. The Duke follows him in the same line. Touch-

stone is the witty fool, and Rosalind one of the women pointed at by Gifford for their profanity. Corin is a natural philosopher; a priest is introduced to be ridiculed.

The usual freedoms are taken with Scripture. Our author must ever had it uppermost in his thoughts, so many speeches are pointed with it. Respecting divorce, he is rather Miltonic. It is in this play that we find Shakspere's tribute to the memory of Marlowe.

The famous 'seven ages' conclude without a single reference to religion.

Critics have wondered that our author should have neglected the fine opportunity of putting us in possession of the arguments with which the Duke was converted. How little they had profited by the study of this play! Shakspere had another moral to enforce. Jaques continues to the end the materialist of As You Like It.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

Marriage and irreverence seem to be the Much Adoes of this play. Chiefly is it a covert satire upon the serious of the times in which it was produced, who made so much ado about the licences of the stage, and the levities of our author.

Profane allusions are defended under the name of 'old ends,' which is the title Richard III. gives to his quotations from Scripture.

We have a scandalous dialogue between Antonio and Leonato upon 'curst women,' 'curst cows,' and 'apes in hell,' and a projected visit of Beatrice to the 'devil.' Warburton, in order to support the poet's seriousness, throws this into the margin, remarking, 'All this impious nonsense thrown to the bottom is the players, and foisted in without rhyme or reason.' But Johnson, more candid and honest, says, 'Warburton puts them in the margin. They do not indeed deserve so honourable a place. Yet, I am afraid they are too much in the manner of our author, who is sometimes trying to purchase merriment at too dear a rate.' We need not ask how does this 'manner of our author,' to which a critic, so unwilling (being a Christian) as Johnson, confesses, comport with that reverence with which we are called upon to endow Shakspere.

Plainly did our bard anticipate, or reply, to the unavoidable scruples of the religious, to the profane witticisms of his plays; and with archness begs it to be thought, that he 'fears God, howsoever it seems not in him, by some large jests he will make.' Both these latter things are indeed true. The fear of God, indeed, 'does not seem in him,' and the 'large jests' he certainly makes.

The sapient Dogberry is the natural fool of the play. He makes 'God a good man,' and writes it down that people 'hope they serve him.' The polished raillery of Beatrice and Benedict is relieved by the profane simplicity of Dogberry and Verges. Steevens may be added to Warburton as condemning the profanity of this play.

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

The reader will know what to expect in the way of sedateness and seriousness, when he is informed that the knight of the ample paunch is the hero of this play. Campbell has supposed this performance to be the successor of Hamlet. We find a variation of a distinguished idea there. Hamlet thought there was a divinity in the ends of men; Falstaff thinks there is 'a divinity in odd numbers.'

Women, according to the sentiment of the present age, are more religious than men; but according to Gifford, and according to fact, this was not the idea which Shakspere had of the nature of the female character. The Merry Wives excel in the merriment they make with heaven.

This laxity of wit, which in the text we have pointed out, is allowed specially in this play not to be necessary to character. It plainly originated in the taste of the author; and it seems likely to have been for the better security of this diversion that he kept his effusions from publication.

We find that worthy personage, Pistol, representing himself as a 'raven' whom the Lord would feed, but whose faith is of so unsettled a nature, that he picks pockets when he should rely upon Providence. This is a fair example of the idle piety of all these worthies.

Mrs. Quickly has a servant whose 'worse fault is that he is given to prayers;' and Mrs. Page advises Mrs. Ford to 'dispense with such a trifle as going to hell for an eternal

moment or so.' Mrs. Quickly is so spiritually diplomatic, as to consider that at the court of heaven the bonus of a little devotion would procure a serviceable connivance at the debauchery of Falstaff.

But all this is less astonishing than the courtesy of critics towards this assemblage of levities. Mr. Knight especially has been so condescending as to discover 'deep satire' in it. We try in vain to compass in imagination the wonder of mankind when they shall find the plain infidelity of Diderot and Paine to be after all but 'deep satire'—which they assuredly will, should ever Mr. Knight undertake the editorship of the 'Religieuse,' or the 'Age of Reason.' Nowhere else is the equal to be found of the levity of the Merry Wives.

It is a significant fact, that the irreverent passages of this play were after additions of Shakspere.

TWELFTH NIGHT; OR, WHAT YOU WILL.

How far the Twelfth Night is from proving an exception, in point of irreligious philosophy, from any we have examined, is evidenced from the fact that it drew from Johnson the candid regret, that 'Shakspere, in so many passages, ventured so near profaneness.' Yet by some this was supposed to be Shakspere's last work. Knight, by arguing against it from the supposition that Shakspere was employed on more serious subjects, is obliged thereby to admit, that at one time of life he was not reverentially employed.

This play appears to have been designed for the amusement of the legal fraternity of the Temple, and no man better than our author could congenially accommodate the free tastes of that body.

The Clown and Olivia in the Twelfth Night re-enact the parts of the Clown and Countess in a former play. Take one of many instances. It is the hackneyed reproach of the infidel, that if the pious are so sure of future bliss they would never mourn for the dead, who must be better off. Olivia has lost her brother, and declares—

> I know his soul is in heaven, fool.

To which the Clown answers—

> The more fool you, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven.

All the world knows the party who relish these jests, and the school in which they originate.

Fate is the Providence of the Twelfth Night.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

This play, though of antique plot, displays the propensity of our poet to theological satire. It abounds in references to the times of Shakspere, and religious parties then notorious. These animadversions are of the usual depreciatory species.

Thersites is impious throughout. The prologue tells us that 'good or bad is but the chance of war,' and this sentiment of necessity is general in the play. It is '*Time* that friends or ends,' says Pandarus. This hero has a new oath —he swears by 'God's lid.'

Some Puritan is satirised in person in this play—a proof that Shakspere did not hesitate to attack such as were obnoxious to him, on account of their religious scruples respecting the theatre. Knight is evidently wrong in supposing it to be Prynne, who appears not to have written his 'Histrio-Mastix' till twenty years after Shakspere's death. We reject the instance in our favour cited by so eminent an opponent of our views as Knight, when the instance is not tenable—as we have no wish to make out a case, but to make out the truth.

We find frequent touches of Shaksperian morality. His philosophy went to paint morality as independent of religious considerations. With him the laws of morality were written with sufficient plainness on the tablets of the human heart. It was a moral rather than the divine government which he delighted to illustrate.

As one instance of the manner in which Shakspere engrafted his readings of Scripture on every theme, ancient or modern, we may refer to the genealogy of love given by Paris. It is a parody from the first chapter of Matthew, with the words of Jesus in the mouth of Pandarus—'Love is a generation of vipers.'

KING HENRY VIII.

This play affords curious negative evidence of the anti-religious idiosyncracy of our author, who chooses to remain

neutral in depicting two great religious parties, a course hard to be followed, and only to be expected in David Hume, or the historian of Ferney.

King Henry VIII., in spite of Shakspere's denial of it, is disgraced by an indecency which has always been charged upon scoffers.

We find many touches of religion in this performance—particularly the dying speech of Queen Katherine, which is a masterly proof of what our poet might oftener have done, had his taste lain that way.

As usual, we find the priestly character at some discount in point of piety. Wolsey, though great as a man, is little as a divine. Without necessity of character to justify it, our poet makes him irreligious in his early career, and we have only *quasi* piety at his fall. Wolsey speaks of the death of Dr. Pace as the clown to Olivia, and says, 'he was a fool for being virtuous.'

So little favour is bestowed upon the characters of God's professed servants, that when Queen Katherine sees two of them, she is made to say, 'they speak like honest men, pray God they prove so.'

Religion sits awkwardly on the lips of the rapacious but fallen cardinal. He uses it sometimes in bitter irony, sometimes to conceal his impotent malice. He clings to worldly grandeur to the last, and dies when his hopes of success die. While he declares 'his hopes in heaven to dwell,' the audience are made to see how reluctant he is to realise them there.

Our poet is seen further in the natural advantages given to Wolsey over Cranmer. Though in Wolsey ambition, and in Cranmer piety, predominate, yet is there a certain nobility of nature in Wolsey which rises as his fortunes fall; while Cranmer, under the same circumstances, whines and fawns.

In the prologue, Shakspere promises not to be 'bawdy,' and forthwith is so; in the epilogue, he denies that he has abused the city, which he has just done. This furnishes a general key to our author's religious freedoms. He frequently denies them, which seems to be his way of parrying the charge to which he has just laid himself open. The play seems rather underrated by the critics. Shakspere does

not seem, from his own declarations, to be sure of the subject in his hands, and we may conclude that it was not altogether congenial to his character.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

This performance is constructed on the same principle as Love's Labour 's Lost, with more enlarged application. It opposes passion to piety, and nature to grace—demonstrates the force of blood over faith, and from the universality of such victories, inculcates leniency in our judgment of others.

We have the confession of Hallam and other critics, that in Measure for Measure we have a revelation of Shakspere's own nature—of the depths of his own heart, and intricacies of his own being; and when we see the metaphysical liberties in which he indulges—the strange sentiments portrayed—the sceptical and infidel displays with which it abounds—this confession decides the character of our poet's religion and philosophy to be all along as we explain.

The much complained of moral unintelligibility of this drama is cleared up on the hypothesis we have laid down. Let our Shakspere be read as our colleges read Eschylus and Euripides, for dramatic and classical beauties, and the heathenism of these ideas be conceded, and the mystery exists no longer. Question the orthodoxy of Eschylus or Euripides, and the point is conceded; but when the identity of sentiment is pointed out in Shakspere, we are either called upon to shut our eyes to the fact, or accept an interpretation at which consistent criticism revolts.

Steevens allows that our author is responsible for the unnecessary solemnity with which the play opens, and the scriptural reader will discover two parables of Jesus Christ in the mouth of the Duke. The Ten Commandments are the basis of a witticism; and, in the speech of the Duke to Claudio, the reader will find sentiments respecting the relation of parent and child, since adopted by Sir Charles Morgan and by the Jesuits.

In Elbow we have the reproduction of the designedly profane Dogberry. In allusion to *cardinal* peccadilloes, we have an instance of Shakspere's readiness to satirise the failings of the clergy. In Isabella, we have an unreserved

defence of blasphemy; perhaps the most pointed and best ever given. Who would look for this in the mouth of a nun?

It is unnecessary to enumerate at length the points upon which we have at large dilated in the text, except to enlist the attention of the inquirer to the conduct, chiefly of the Friar, who, in this play, materialises human nature, and deduces from the condition of mortality the consolations of atheism, which he administers, in lieu of those of Revelation, to the condemned Claudio.

When the Duke priest had instilled his material philosophy into the criminal, he leaves him prepared for death; but when Isabella, the religious character of the play, has an interview with this same criminal, her brother, he craves for life with baseness, and is willing to purchase it at the expense of her infamy. The most casual reader cannot avoid being touched with the moral intended here. Claudio, who before had manned his heart 'to hug darkness as a bride,' now under the influence of the 'horrible imaginings' of religion, is laid prostrate in pitiable, maniacal terror. It is a startling and highly-finished illustration of Hamlet's daring reflection, that the religious 'conscience doth make cowards of us all.'

The leniency of our poet, not only to failings of life, but of sentiment, is strikingly illustrated in this play. Barnardine, a practical atheist, who 'apprehends no farther than this world, and squares his life accordingly,' is pardoned his murder, and dismissed in the most worldly way to prepare for 'better times.' Nor does the Duke's order to the Friar 'to advise him,' weaken the matter-of-fact forgiveness of the infidel murderer.

But we are quite saved from elaborate enumeration here, of these points of philosophy in Measure for Measure, by the concessions made respecting them. Mr. Knight, in his commentary, takes little or no notice of those remarkable passages which in the text we have brought under the reader's notice, and which no ingenuity can make comport with his theory of Shakspere's reverence. We are, indeed, told of the reverence with which we should approach Shakspere—but we hate that Germanic mysticism which erects an author

into an article of faith—which subdues us with vague ideas of depths never sounded, of philosophy never explained, of systems never arranged!

The passages and scenes which Knight confesses to 'hurry past,' and desires not to look at again, and at which the inquirer will find Coleridge was 'pained,' are significant facts, which we only notice as confirmatory of that view which we have been compelled to take of our author's opinions, and which have decisive weight in connection with a play so eminently the exponent of the poet's heart. Could we carry this investigation farther—could Shakspere's life and times be fairly revealed to us—his sentiments and associations—could we see, as we should desire to see, the true man in his own individuality, he would not be a less interesting metaphysical, moral, or dramatic study than now; but how many of his present eulogists would grow dumb! Though something of this kind should result from expositions like the present, it is better for all parties, we conceive, that the whole truth should be told.

OTHELLO.

Our poet, in this play, illustrates with equal brilliancy the passion of jealousy and the doctrine of necessity. So perfect a necessitarian is Iago, that modern materialists have recognised in his character the most perfect exemplification, in literature, of moral philosophy reduced to a science.*

We have pointed out that there is the same material gradation in Iago's revenge as in Othello's jealousy. We differ, for reasons adduced, from the common opinion that Iago's conduct was without adequate motives.

When Iago tells Brabantio that he would not serve God if the devil bid him, our author, in the mouth of Brabantio, pronounces him a 'profane wretch.' Now, why should we hesitate to admit what Shakspere himself allows? It may be said that what he knew to be profane he would desire to conceal, and not himself proclaim. But Shakspere had sagacity to see that it was to his advantage to do that himself.

* How surely did Iago calculate the effects of the handkerchief on the jealous mind of Othello—the laws of mind being equally fixed and certain as those of the magnet, etc.—*Zoist.*

He could dull the edge of censure in applying it to himself, and avert suspicion from other instances where he omitted to remark it.

Cassio drunk is religious. What reverence could be intended by these contemptible exhibitions of sottish piety? The Lord's Prayer seasons the merriment of his inebriation.

Othello, in the last act, utters one of those determined blasphemies we have before noticed, when he demands' 'if there are no stones in heaven but what serve for thunder,' which called forth the evasive ingenuity of Steevens. He is indeed terrified at the fiends which will 'snatch him;' but this does not deter him from self-murder, by which he realises those horrors, and descends straight down to 'gulfs of liquid fire.' The lesson is equivocal. But from the first he is as unchristian in his sentiments, as at last he is in his conduct. On meeting Desdemona in Cyprus, the reader will find that he utters precisely the idea of Chærea, in the Eunuch of Terence:—'Proh Jupiter! Nunc est profecto, cum interfici perpeti me possum. Ne hoc gaudium contaminet vita ægritudine aliquâ.'

Johnson recognises, in a speech of Othello, an idea of some sympathy between cause and effect which extends throughout the universe. In truth, he might have said, that this play in particular illustrates this sympathy. We think the moral of Othello a continuation of the moral of Measure for Measure in this respect. In the latter play, Shakspere would show that justice, divine or human, which would punish offences according to the laws of earth, or those supposed to be of heaven, is in its penalties out of all proportion to the sins. He would set mercy and forgiveness far above justice. In Othello, on the other hand, he would paint the bad effects of private justice, the wild justice of revenge as it is called, that left to ourselves we are very bad judges of punishment for injuries; that we are much worse often than can be imagined in proportioning penalties to offences; that Iago, in Othello, following Measure for Measure, is out of all measure.

KING LEAR.

The materialistic character of this play is well indicated by the early enunciation in it, and disquisition upon the

ancient axiom of materialists. Lear perpetually employs Lucretian oaths. Nature is the goddess of Edmund. Gloster's prediction is an imitation of a solemn prophecy of Jesus. The purport of it here is, that the intentions of heaven are indicated by certain conduct of men on earth —signs which Christ pointed out. Edmund ridicules the whole, and styles such forebodings 'the excellent foppery of the world.' Shakspere's idea of the religious was, that they were melancholy, and accordingly Edmund is set to sigh out, 'fa, sol, la, mi.' A dialogue is cut short with 'come, come,' our author's usual abbreviation of irreverence. The fool asks 'a schoolmaster to whip him for speaking the truth'—a further apology for unallowed liberties taken. Kent satirises the creation of man in a style often occurring. He vows that 'a tailor, a stone-cutter, or a painter, could not have made Cornwall so ill, though they had been but two hours at the trade.' Lear ridiculously anthropomorphises heaven. He asks, 'if they do love *old men.*' When Lear would 'physic pomp,' it is to 'show the heavens more just.' His ideas are always material: he would alter *men* as the means of improving the reputation of the gods. Edgar, feigned mad, and Lear, quite so, are set to question each other upon the cause of nature, and origin of its laws. Surely if 'deep satire' is anywhere in our author, this is an instance of it. The pious Gloster once consoles himself with the hope that he shall *see* heaven avenge ingratitude to Lear. Cruelly is this hope mocked, as heaven permits his eyes to be torn out to prevent the fulfilment of his expectation. But the ingratitude of Goneril and Regan arouses natural opposition, and Shakspere shows in its delineation how deeply he was imbued with a belief in what has since been much paraded—the natural laws of morality.

Lear burlesques 'yea' and 'nay.' He speaks to the thunder as Christ did to the tempest—using the very words. The judgment of Jesus on the woman taken in adultery, is also in his mouth.

Cordelia is not religious. When Edgar proclaims 'the gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us,' it includes the philosophy insisted upon by Dr. Gall. Kent, in despair, commits himself to sleep and the

care of Fortune, whom he prays to 'once more turn her wheel.' Lear's defiances of heaven, though uttered under the cover of madness, are yet to be judged by their tenor. What can be more startling than such a speech as this?—

> Let the great gods,
> That keep this dreadful pother over our heads,
> Find out their enemies now.

In his misfortunes he has no reliance on Providence, and his great comforter is the fool. 'Milk-livered' Albany is the designation bestowed upon one who would follow Christ's precept, and not resent injury. True, this proceeds from a bad woman; but it has accompaniments intended to touch the precept itself.

Gloster's religion is made the instrument of his misfortunes, and of Edmund' svillanies, while the moral Edgar is in the end successful. This seems to be the play's moral.

So far from dissenting from our conclusions, the reader will see that severer ones might have been drawn. There is in King Lear all that grossness of materialism which seeks to degrade man to the level of the beasts.

MACBETH.

Combined with intense dramatic interest, this remarkable play sustains all the Shaksperian characteristics in philosophy, material, moral, and religious.

Not, as in another performance, is witchcraft directly ridiculed, but it is practically and powerfully discredited in Macbeth, which fact denotes, taking into account the age in which our poet wrote, his immunity from current religious impressions.

Still our author draws upon Lucretius. Both Banquo and Macbeth speak with his tongue. Macbeth's speech on the death of his wife seems borrowed from Catullus and Seneca—embracing sentiments that in Catullus have always been held indicative of atheism. Macbeth's addresses are such as enable us to apply to our poet the lines of Campbell, descriptive of an atheist, in his 'Pleasures of Hope.'

The death of Cawdor is a careful picture of the last end of man—but no mention of religion. He dies well without

it. The least that can be said of this omission is, that it is a fine opportunity neglected by Shakspere for adding, had he been disposed, the graces of religion.

The strong sentiments of natural morality which we have noticed in Shakspere are brought out strikingly. Macbeth owes to Duncan that 'service that *pays itself*.' Lady Macbeth, discovering in her doomed victim the lineaments of her father's face, is more shaken by it than by all the influences of religion. Macbeth is always strong in this idea; and while he fears no future, fears the turning of the poisoned chalice to his own lip. Here, again, with all the brilliancy of poetry, our author anticipates the moralist in Sir James Mackintosh.

Death and sleep are reciprocals with our characters throughout. Even the castle porter makes himself merry with the 'primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.' Banquo is dismissed to death, with a doubt and a sneer concerning his fate. The materialism of death is unfaltering. Duncan dead—he sleeps well—'*nothing can touch him further*.' The natural goodness of human nature, which principle the play so largely illustrates, is even shown to have been strong in the hired murderers, who, by the frowns and buffets of the world, had been chafed into assassins. The authoritative and dreadful interrogative of Macduff, as to whether heaven looked on and saw the murder of his little ones, and interposed no rescue, is one of those passionate pieces of impiety (invented by our author) in which blasphemy is clothed with the eternal apology of originating in hopeless anguish and unmerited misery.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

Shakspere has before given us sketches of men without religion, who at the same time challenge general admiration —as the death of Cawdor in the last play; but here we are treated to entire characters, the logic of whose lives is religionless, held up to admiration as the noblest of a nation celebrated for its natural nobility of individual character. Here are displayed men who enter into the most terrrible schemes without seeking any help of heaven, and who execute them without appearing to need it, and whose glory is

(contrary to Christian ethics), that they are self-dependent. Cassius is a professed follower of Epicurus. Cicero, of old, in what he has left us concerning the 'Nature of the Gods,' remarks, that 'Those whom we call gods are only the nature of things.' In his book of Divination, 'It is a great folly to make the gods the artificers (*effectores*) of things, in place of inquiry into the causes of things.' The Cicero of our play reiterates these same sentiments, showing another of our author's favourite sources of opinion.

We find suicide, indeed, argued against, but the common objections of mankind are the staple of the arguments; while, in its favour, the fine and curious reasons of materialism are alleged and strengthened by being made to operate in practice. A striking instance is afforded us of Shakspere's real views in his management of the death of Brutus. Plutarch, whom Shakspere gives evidence of having consulted for materials, tells us, that Brutus died with the firm hope of future life. Shakspere suppresses this fact, and when he is disinclined to suicide, he converts him to it by the Epicurean reasons of Cassius, and depicts him dying as atheistically as Cæsar.

Cæsar's character accords with that atheism which, according to Sallust, he avowed in the open senate. It cannot be that great influence must not be exercised in favour of such sentiments when they drop, with all the graces of poetry, from the lips of the 'foremost man of all this world.'

Without even the reservation of Hume, our author depicts reliance on super-naturalism as 'hateful error;' and futher, to show its danger, Cassius, who at last listens to it, is ruined for his credence. Abundant are the passages in this play in which powerful support is lent to material philosophy. The solemn and manly parting of Brutus and Cassius, bearing up nobly against impending death, such as poet never before depicted —men who stooped not to seek religious aid—is a signal corroboration of our author's philosophy. None but Shakspere ever pronounced such an eulogy on such a character as Brutus—as is implied in those words, in which the onlooking world are supposed to accord that he was a *model man*.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

This play illustrates the principle that the omnipotence of the passions (in this case that of love) can annihilate all expectation or anxiety concerning death or futurity.

Antony, in his love, excludes all idea of, or room for, religion. He early reverts, as does Cleopatra and other characters, to that gross materialism which assimilates 'men and beast.' He and his mistress reduce all life's nobleness to a sensual kiss.

Diligently searches our poet the Scriptures for profane witticisms. We have Anna, the mother of John, the special subject of a jest—and the pagan Antony borrows an oath from the Psalms of David. Ever diversifying the irreverent designation of Deity, we find the gods called the '*tailors of the earth*,' who performed for once certain functions of that craft. Antony affirms necessity's potency, Lepidus defends it, and Cæsar inculcates submission to it. Pompey opposes the expectation of men from prayer. Suicide is the great theme of the play's laudation—self-destruction is to conquer one's self—to win a nobleness in record; not to do it is god-detested 'baseness'—a woman is made elaborately to defend the act—the *patience* which would endure joyless life is 'sottish'—death is painted as proud to take the suicide—and six persons (Cleopatra included,) perish by their own hands, believers in this doctrine.

Cleopatra, in the prospect of death, declares, she has '*no friend but resolution*'—and Antony, who disbelieves in the future, or, in a paroxysm of love anticipates a seraglio there, dies philosophising upon a kiss. Nothwithstanding these erratic peculiarities, for which our author apologises, Antony is declared the 'rarest spirit that did ever steer humanity.' Are these the philosophic lessons of a Christian poet?

We ought not to forget our Clown, who partakes of the usual clownish inspiration. He is sure 'the devil will hurt not woman, who is a dish for the gods.'

CYMBELINE.

This play is founded upon another story borrowed from Boccaccio. Antique in time and character, it abounds in



modern sentiments, and ranks next to Measure for Measure in its questionings of a future state.

We are introduced to two gentlemen, whose blood no more obey the king than they do the *heavens*. Iachimo, as so many others have done, sees in sleep only 'the ape of *death*.' That Collins should have substituted another song for one of Shakspere's is not without meaning. Nature is always well spoken of, but the gods disparagingly. They are perpetually addressed as the servants of men, and threatened for their disobedience.

We have a gaoler who eulogises the 'charity of a *penny cord*,' and essays to reason Posthumus out of his religion. In the 'deep philosophical speculation' (for such is the Knightism by which it is designated) with which our gaoler favours Posthumus, he exhibits all the argument, and to Posthumus is given only speculative abuse. The humour of the gaoler is conceded to be Voltairian, and he quotes the speculative infidelity of Montaigne. Yet the gaoler is made a good man, and utters generous sentiments and betrays lofty aspirations, while the religious hero, Posthumus, is weak, credulous, cruel, and cowardly.

An amnesty is granted with grace, by Posthumus, in the end to Iachimo, and '*pardon*,' proclaims Cymbeline, 'is the word for all,' as in Measure for Measure.

CORIOLANUS.

Julius Cæsar, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus, are three Roman plays of the poet's latter days, and with the intervention of Cymbeline, follow successively. In them our author seems to have drawn to his heart's content upon his favourite notion of the sufficiency of natural morality, and to have presented us with a series of 'godded'-men.

Coriolanus has a natural, an indomitable pride, on the wings of which he soars above the gods; 'he will not spare to gird them'—he cannot repent even for the gods, yet is he, despite of his haughty defiance of religion, depicted of such high quality as not to be induced to lie, nor to cease to honour his own truth.

The gods, in the mouth of Menenius, are denied even the attribute of mercy, while Volumnia asks Coriolanus, 'Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man still to remember wrongs?'

A lofty strain of impiety pervades the characters of this play, apparently so supported by moral dignity as to be placed above the reach of censure. Our poet improves with experience.

Tullus Aufidius no more regards religion than Coriolanus. Sanctuary, church, prayers, and sacrifices are with him only so many '*rotten*' principles or '*privileges*' which do stop men's fury.

The doctrine of necessity is further explained in this play in detail. The citizens and Coriolanus carry it to the issue of non-responsibility. Shakspere again alters Plutarch to introduce his own blasphemy.

TIMON OF ATHENS.

This play is prolific in instances borrowed from Scripture, and appropriated with our author's usual freedom. In the person of Alcibiades we have another reasoner against the divine precept of passive endurance, and not only precept but example is given against the doctrine. Timon leaves Athens using the words of Jesus on leaving Jerusalem, with the variation of Timon wishing what Jesus merely predicted. Timon's wood-soliloquy is drawn both from the Old and New Testaments, and introduces the child Jesus under the anti-christian epithet of 'bastard.'

Besides other coincidences in events and circumstances, Timon's revulsion of feeling from philanthropy to misanthropy, is something like the character of Jesus—warm in its affections towards the world, wishing peace and good-will towards men, willing to nestle them under his wings, but in consequence of their rejection of him, heaping denunciations on them and prophesying of them every ill.

Timon is a thorough materialist—with him human 'nature grows towards the *earth*, and is fashioned for the journey *dull and heavy*.' Alcibiades speaks of him as becomes his character and opinions. He informs the senate that it hath pleased *time* and *fortune* to lie heavy on Timon, who, his *fate* aside, was a man of comely virtues. Timon's materialism is consistent, and he, consequently, defies the gods he disbelieves —he gives them ironical thanks for empty dishes at dinner. When he blesses the breeding sun, he improves on Hamlet,

inasmuch as Timon extends its powers from life to morals, and implores it to touch the several *fortunes* of men. So deep is his own disbelief, that he considers that the priest himself does not believe. In the many minute comparisons which Timon institutes between men and beasts, so fine was the opportunity afforded our author for touching on, and illustrating man's spiritual superiority, that it may safely be inferred that the point could not have been unintentionally neglected.

Timon is an illustration of the law of necessity, in which he believes. His abused philanthropy generates his misanthropy. But his materialism never forsakes him—he dies as he lived, and erects his

> Everlasting mansion
> Upon the beached verge of the salt flood.

WINTER'S TALE.

Indicative points of irreligion, questions of metaphysics, necessity, and other knotty topics of speculation, our author, by his long experience, now puts on and off as easily as a glove.

Winter's Tale is another illustration of nature changed by natural causes. In its execution, we have again 'the word set against the word.' The 'verily' of Jesus, here facetiously designated the 'limber vow,' is elaborately argued to be an oath, consequently involving its originator in the charge of inconsistency in putting it forth as a substitute for swearing. *Nihil ex nihilo fit* is again brought into discussion. The superintendence of 'powers divine' is sceptically put by Hermione in the usual form of disbelievers. When Antigonus promises belief in (what was a religious point in Shakspere's days) the walking of spirits, he condescends to be '*superstitiously* squared by it.' '*Dead and rotten*' is still the material end of life shadowed forth. Autolycus is a kind of resurrection of Barnardine, who, before he believes in the life to come, 'must sleep out the thought of it.' We have Hume's liberty and necessity in an homœopathic quantity. Florizel talks Lucretian philosophy, and gives a recipe for making new religions. The animus of these desultory strictures is expressed by Paulina—'It is required men do *awake* their faith.'

THE TEMPEST.

In every way is the Tempest worthy of the distinction assigned it as the final performance of our author. In every way is it in perfect keeping, in religion and philosophy, with the preceding plays.

First are we introduced to a 'bawling blasphemous' boatswain—our author never proceeds without the aid of one of these characters. *Fate* is besought to keep him to his destiny by the old counsellor of Naples. Though neither reverencing God nor man, and preferring to labour for his safety to praying for his preservation, yet he is spared.

Innumerable times has Shakspere insisted on the natural goodness of the human heart (in opposition, be it observed, to original sin); but a more perfect illustration than any yet given, was wanting to enforce the idea fully, and Miranda is presented as an unsophisticated child of nature, in whom the finest sentiments of humanity spontaneously arise. Her sympathy for the shipwrecked crew is the purest and most touching imaginable, and she reproaches the supineness of heaven with a pathos that comes recommended by all the graces of which impiety is susceptible. She exclaims:—

> Had I been any god of power, I would
> Have sunk the sea within the earth, or e'er
> It should the good ship so have swallow'd, and
> The freighting souls within her.

Providence and 'accidents most strange' are jointly put down by Shakspere as the deliverers of the crew from danger. This amalgamation of divine and natural causes is what a man of his sagacity could not undesignedly make. Separately he has sometimes used one, and sometimes the other, but it is easy to see how immensely the balance preponderates where he adheres to natural causes.

Caliban proposes the murder of Prospero after the manner of Jael. Trinculo, as Cassio drunk, has recourse to the Lord's Prayer to spice his speeches.

Prospero's speech on the dissolution of all things, viewed in the light of Shakspere's philosophy, as we have displayed it, is far more intelligible than by the commentators' version,

and a signal and brilliant consummation of the poet's materialistic teachings. In language most laboured, unequivocal, and emphatic, we are told that the great globe and all humanity shall dissolve, and leave no wreck of identity behind. To prevent ambiguity in the supposition that only matter is the pageant that shall fade, it is reiterated that '*we* are such stuff as dreams' are made of—that when 'our revels are ended, our little life is rounded by a sleep;' enforcing the same material idea peculiar to Seneca and Cicero—to ancient and modern atheists.

Prospero has the same lofty morality as his daughter, and seems to think that the sight of evil would be the cure of the spirit of evil in the uncorrupted condition of our nature.

From Prospero and Caliban, Shakspere has delineated the characters of the Tempest in his usual vein, and with more than his usual piquancy, giving his peculiarities of philosophy, moral and religious, with a finish worthy of *his* last production, whether it be so or not.

THE POEMS OF SHAKSPERE.

A few words will suffice to characterise these poems, and to establish their coincidences with our author's other productions. Everywhere we discover analogies or germs of ideas developed in the plays: Malone agrees as to the marked conformity between the poems and the plays on the subject of death, Venus calls it an 'earth worm'—an '*eternal sleeping*.' With Homer and Shelley, death is painted as the 'brother of sleep.' The Sonnets talk of 'death's *dateless* night.' We leave 'this vile world' only 'with vilest worms to dwell'—to descend to the 'grim care of Death.'

Our poet has been, on account of these poems, compared to Ovid. True it is that in point of lasciviousness he coincides but too well with the known freedom of unbelievers. Venus reasons in two places, in the language of Isabella, in Measure for Measure; her sentiments on suicide are Cleopatra's; she would conquer herself after the manner of Brutus and Antony. The materialism of thought throughout these poems may be extensively identified.

Lucrece's 'immortality' is her fame—so is our poet's own *eternity*. In the sonnets, immortal life is *memory*. Bound-

less as is our poet's fertility of thought, he seldom avails himself of strictly religious terms, retaining them at the same time in their pure sense. Once when he alludes to the 'judgment,' the thought has a mundane turn. The phrases of religion, of which many are introduced in these poems, are either prostituted to carnal love, or placed in contrast with Love's superior potency, which is our poet's 'idolatry.' He borrows from the Lord's Prayer to 'hallow' it. In fine, to use his own words, 'Religion's *love* puts out *religion's eye*.'

Unfaulteringly is the theory of necessity also illustrated. Lucrece reproaches 'opportunity' as a god. *Love* is often deified, and 'Time' declared 'the tutor both of good and bad.' No faith in natural causes can be stronger than this. Men are compared to wax, on whom are stamped any semblance. Necessitarians have never gone farther in their analogies.

Having now completed such general summary of the particulars of the plays and poems as seemed necessary to inform the reader of the nature and scope of the work, we proceed to the examination, and to present in detail the facts and arguments here epitomised.

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

There are, however, scattered here and there, many strokes something resembling his [Shakspere's] peculiar manner, though not his best manner, which, as they could not be imitated from him, would incline one to believe this might possibly be his most juvenile performance, written and acted before his poetical genius had had time to unfold and form itself.—*Revival.*

MERES, the contemporary and, some say, the friend of Shakspere, put this play in the list of the poet's works. Collier and Ulrici, the latest of writers on Shakspere, have allowed it to be one of his earliest performances. The reviewer of Ulrici, in the *Athenæum*, says—'It is, according to an intuitive conviction which we feel, and which is sometimes superior to even the most logical reasoning, not the work of a young poet at all, but of one who had "supped full" of similar fancies, and familiarised his mind with their morbid indulgence—a man of genius, no doubt, but to whose perverse taste the universe was not only a fallen, but an unredeemed, creation. Such, at no time, was a characteristic of the Shakspearian disposition.'

According to the opinion of Hallam, such was at one time the character of Shakspere. We could give innumerable instances both of juvenility and passages similar to those in other plays, but we must confine ourselves to our purpose.

People who have an opinion of Shakspere's religious veneration might well wish to repudiate this drama. It has always appeared to be the most openly impious of all his plays. It seems to us professedly written against the gods. Religion is the cause which produces the catastrophe—it is the cause of wrong, the cause of retribution. An avowed

atheist is introduced upon the stage to utter blasphemies; and all the characters, those in the beginning pious, join in the general vomit of impieties. The black atheist, no doubt, is a bad character—a devil who loves evil for its own sake; but he is a black, the natural enemy of the whites, and Shakspere ends by giving him a touch of love. He is a father before he dies, and the infant joins him to humanity, which shews he had social and affectionate feelings sufficient to have made him, under circumstances differently disposed, a member of a civilised community.

Byron cannot take vice in a character more abhorrent to man than in the type of Cain, the first murderer; yet he has made him the vehicle of his own irreligious sentiments, and has not feared to contrast him with his victim Abel, who was religious, and commands our pity.

What was said of Marlowe, by Green, might certainly be said of the author of Titus Andronicus. He speaks of his 'atheist, Tamburlaine, daring God out of heaven,' and 'blaspheming with the mad Priest of the Sun.' So that one of themselves can attach the sentiments of the character to the writer. The character and the sentiments were the author's choice, and he was to be made responsible for them. There was not the doctrine then, that form what characters you please, give them what sentiments you like, the *dramatis personæ* were accountable; the man who made them was not amenable to moral criticism. Shakspere does give us an atheist; but the religious Titus Andronicus dares God out of heaven more than the atheist Aaron, who, consistent in his disbelief, offends by his actions and opinions more than by his reproaches.

Nowhere does Shakspere, to use one of his own expressions, less 'spare to gird the gods' than in Titus Andronicus. By some, the play has been imputed to Marlowe, probably from its similarity to his plays and impiety. If Shakspere equals him in having an atheist, and making many of his characters talk the sort of atheism attributed to Tamburlaine, it may be said, Shakspere 'blasphemes with a mad priest' when he makes the Duke, in Measure for Measure, take the character of one, and talk the very contrary of what was to be expected from his profession. Under these circumstances,

little more will be required on our part than to let the play speak for itself. We think there is also a poetical moral in this play, which, had it been historically true, would probably have stopped the cruelty and barbarism of the Roman triumphs which the world suffered under their sway. May be Shakspere's love of humanity and abhorrence of oppression, prompted him in fiction to avenge the cause of suffering humanity, and give an instance of retributive justice on a nation.

Marcus Andronicus, in his speech for his brother, as worthy of the empire, says, 'he is surnamed the Pious.' Titus, leading the Queen of the Goths in triumph, has borne along the dead bodies of his sons to give them burial. Lucius, one of the surviving sons, for superstitious reasons, demands the proudest prisoner of the Goths in sacrifice to the *manes* of his brothers.

> *Titus.* I give him you, the noblest that survives;
> The eldest son of this distressed Queen.

This introduces the strongest and finest feeling of the human kind—maternal affection: which, violated, is to be the justification for the subsequent vengeance of Tamora; and the want of mercy, of forgiveness in Titus, is to be the cause of all his misfortunes. Aaron, who accompanies them, and against whom, like Iago, we do not hear anything before he is brought upon the stage, is in love with Tamora—is linked to the cause of the Goths—and from this barbarous usage, has a motive to vow vengeance against the Romans, and hold humanity in detestation.

> *Tamora.* Stay, Roman brethren;—gracious conqueror,
> Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,
> A mother's tears in passion for her son:
> And, if thy sons were ever dear to thee,
> O, think my sons to be as dear to me.
> Sufficeth not, that we are brought to Rome,
> To beautify thy triumphs, and return
> Captive to thee, and to thy Roman yoke;
> But must my sons be slaughter'd in the streets,
> For valiant doings in their country's cause?
> O! if to fight for king and commonweal
> Were piety in thine, it is in these.
> Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood.

Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?
Draw near them then in being merciful:
Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge.
Thrice-noble Titus, spare my first-born son.

Titus. Patient yourself, madam, and pardon me.
These are their brethren, whom you Goths beheld
Alive, and dead; and for their brethren slain
Religiously they ask a sacrifice:
To this your son is mark'd, and die he must,
T' appease their groaning shadows that are gone.

Here we have this pagan, Tamora, calling the Romans brothers, and using the sentiment of loving your neighbour as yourself, doing as you would be done unto, in order to induce the natural feelings of pity towards a mother and her son. She pleads that Roman triumphs would be sufficient without ending in blood, and she asks, why must her sons be slaughtered in the streets for fighting in their country's cause? If it was piety in *his* sons, it was in *her's;* which was again the Tuquoque argument—think of others as for yourself.

Not only this application of circumstances to 'yourself' will be used by Isabella, in Measure for Measure, but the persuasion for mercy put into the mouth of Tamora is the same used by Isabella, and Portia in the Merchant of Venice. Only the same writer could have conformed so exactly to the same sentiment and expression. Besides, it is Shakspere's morality in the Two Gentlemen of Verona, Measure for Measure, and Cymbeline. The charity which he inculcated ought to have no bounds here or hereafter, visible or invisible; and the consequences of the infringement of it, he is going to give as a moral and example.

Titus, in answer, says, the Romans have no other brethren than themselves, whom the Goths see alive and dead. His sons say they will hew the limbs of her son to pieces on the fire. Tamora's reply conveys a bitter satire on their religion.

Tamora. O cruel, irreligious piety!
Chiron. Was ever Scythia half so barbarous?
Demetrius. Oppose not Scythia to ambitious Rome.
Alarbus goes to rest, and we survive
To tremble under Titus' threat'ning look.

Then, madam, stand resolv'd; but hope withal,
The self-same gods, that arm'd the queen of Troy
With opportunity of sharp revenge
Upon the Thracian tyrant in his tent,
May favour Tamora, the queen of Goths,
(When Goths were Goths, and Tamora was queen,)
To quit the bloody wrongs upon her foes.

Whilst one son explains, by his comparison between Rome and Scythia, the justice between nations, which Shakspere would interpret, the other son satirises religion by introducing his own, no less than his mother did that of her foes. It is done in the peculiar style of Shakspere, and sets religion against religion to bring on universal destruction.

Lucius comes in to say they have offered the incense of the entrails of the son of the Queen of the Goths to heaven, and it only remains to bury their brethren.

Titus. Let it be so, and let Andronicus
Make this his latest farewell to their souls.
In peace and honour rest you here, my sons,
Rome's readiest champions, repose you here in rest,
Secure from worldly chances and mishaps:
Here lurks no treason, here no envy swells;
Here grow no damned grudges, here no storms,
No noise, but silence and eternal sleep.

Who will not recognise in this farewell speech of Andronicus to his son's remains, the material conclusions of Shakspere on the same occasion in Macbeth, Cleopatra, and Hamlet? There is peculiar and extensive similarity between their sentiments and those cited; but death is scarcely ever mentioned by Shakspere but in words to the same effect as in the last line. Moschus, who flourished 272 years before Christ, in 'an elegy on the death of his preceptor, Bion,' has a sentiment similar to this of Shakspere.

But we, the great, the brave, the learned, and the wise,
Soon as the hand of death has closed our eyes,
In tombs forgotten lie, no suns restore,
We sleep, for ever sleep, to rise no more.

Dr. Beattie, in the first edition of his poem, used some expressions which would admit of a similar interpretation—the denial of a future state. On its being mentioned to him by a friend, he erased the words in a second edition.

Titus commences by killing his own son, which further justifying his subsequent misfortunes, is in imitation of Brutus, made to satirise Roman virtue. The Queen of the Goths has a different theme.

> *Tamora.* I'll find a day to massacre them all;
> And raze their faction and their family,
> The cruel father and his traitorous sons,
> To whom I sued for my dear son's life;
> And make them know what 'tis to let a queen
> Kneel in the streets, and beg for grace in vain.

Tamora thus declares and justifies her intentions when Saturnine upbraids her with not seeking revenge. Aaron appears, and says he will guide Tamora to the ruin of the Roman commonwealth. His hatred is against it, and not against individuals. He says,—

> Hark, Tamora, the empress of my soul,
> Which never hopes more heav'n than rests in thee;

a sentiment given by Shakspere to lovers—the reader will find it in Othello.

Tamora tells Lavinia, that her father's cruelty is the reason she will show no pity to her. Lavinia introduces the scriptural fact of ravens feeding people, as it is by Antigonus in the Winter's Tale. It makes no impression on Tamora, who is not inspired with humanity any more than Titus was: the hearts of mankind are left untouched, though beasts, it is asserted, have been taught divine pity. This, in this place, seems the moral of Shakspere.

Marcus, on seeing the cruelties that have been practised upon his niece, says,—

> If I do wake, some planet strike me down,
> That I may slumber in eternal sleep!

Aaron says,—

> Let fools do good, and fair men call for grace,
> Aaron will have his soul black like his face.
> *Titus.* O hear! I lift this one hand up to heav'n,
> And bow this feeble ruin to the earth;
> If any power pities wretched tears,
> To that I call. What, wilt thou kneel with me?

Do then, dear heart, for heav'n shall hear our prayers,
Or with our sighs we'll breathe the welkin dim,
And stain the sun with fogs, as sometimes clouds,
When they do hug him in their melting bosoms.

Marcus. Oh! brother, speak with possibilities,
And do not break into these deep extremes.

Titus. Is not my sorrow deep, having no bottom?
Then be my passions bottomless with them.

Marcus. But yet, let reason govern thy lament.

Titus. If there were reason for these miseries,
Then unto limits could I bind my woes.
When heaven doth weep, doth not the earth o'erflow?
If the winds rage, doth not the sea wax mad,
Threat'ning the welkin with his big swoll'n face?
And wilt thou have a reason for this coil?
I am the sea, hark how her sighs do blow;
She is the weeping welkin, I the earth;
Then must my sea be moved with her sighs;
Then must my earth with her continual tears
Become a deluge, overflow'd and drown'd:
For why? my bowels cannot hide her woes,
But like a drunkard must I vomit them.
Then give me leave, for losers will have leave
To ease their stomachs with their bitter tongues.

Shakspere gives the same idea of death to Marcus as he had done to Titus, and makes him wish for it on that account. The reflection of Aaron is the scoff of impiety at religion, from the consideration of those who, professing it, have fallen into misfortune. But Titus inveighs against heaven in reproaches, doubts, and taunts, after the varied manner of Shakspere displayed in many characters. They behave, on appealing to heaven—as the player in Hamlet does speaking of Hecuba, as Laertes, as Lear, and others in succeeding dramas. By the terms Marcus applies to his brother's language, we see that it was not meant for religion, or even reason, but invective, and as such Titus defends it. He could see no reason for his miseries; he would not, therefore, address those supposed to have produced them with real supplication, confession, and resignation, as worshippers do towards the divinity. He had directed his bitter tongue against heaven, to ease his 'stomach,' the consolation which Shakspere always ministers to his characters under misfortunes.

When the hand of Andronicus is returned, with the heads of his two sons, then Marcus, hitherto the moderator of his brother, breaks forth—

> Now let hot Ætna cool in Sicily,
> And be my heart an ever-burning hell;
> These miseries are more than may be borne.
> To weep with them that weep doth ease some deal;
> But sorrow flouted at is double death.

This action and these words coming immediately after the prayers of Titus and Lavinia, give a poignancy and additional meaning to the speech of Marcus.

Titus now bids adieu to sorrow, and laughs with joy at the thought of revenge as the bliss of the future. He says of his sons executed,—

> For these two heads do seem to speak to me,
> And threat me I shall never come to bliss,
> Till all these mischiefs be return'd again,
> Even in their throats that have committed them.

Another Coriolanus—he sends Lucius to raise an army of Goths against Rome. He tells Lavinia to kill herself. Marcus says,—

> Fie! brother, fie! teach her not thus to lay
> Such violent hands upon her tender life.
> *Titus.* How now! has sorrow made thee dote already?

Not only is the condemnation of suicide represented as the language of dotage, but a poor joke is made of the common conventional language for suicide—'laying hands' on yourself—Lavinia having been deprived of her hands.

> [Marcus *strikes the dish with a knife.*
> What dost thou strike at, Marcus, with thy knife?
> *Marcus.* At that that I have killed, my lord; a fly.
> *Titus.* Out on thee, murtherer; thou kill'st my heart;
> Mine eyes are cloy'd with view of tyranny:
> A deed of death done on the innocent
> Becomes not Titus' brother: get thee gone;
> I see thou art not for my company.
> *Marcus.* Alas, my lord, I have but kill'd a fly.
> *Titus.* But how, if that fly had a father and mother?
> How would he hang his slender gilded wings,
> And buz lamenting doings in the air!



or harmless fly,
at with his pretty buzzing melody
ne here to make us merry; and thou hast kill'd him.

a, in Pericles, never hurt a fly, and, therefore, could
k why any one should wish to do her an injury.
; the cruelty of the gods to man, to the killing of
boys, is in Lear; and commentators have seen an
Lear in the madness of Andronicus. It is a touch
ophy common in Shakspere, which he extended
ls, at least in words, and which he could put himself
nation of, as he does here, and in Jaques of As You
It is expressive of his universal charity and repre-
f all injury, which it must be said of him, he would
m the world here, and from the thoughts of the
come.

Lavinia turns to Ovid's Metamorphoses which
story of Philomel, and a description of the place
o the one where she met with her misfortunes,
xclaims—

O, why should nature build so foul a den,
Unless the gods delight in tragedies!

her to write—

What God will have discover'd for revenge;

itting down on the sand the names of Chiron and
s, the perpetrators of her violation, Titus says, in

Magni Dominator poli,
n lentus audis scelera? tam lentus vides?

Marcus. Oh, calm thee, gentle lord, although I know
re is enough written upon this earth
stir a mutiny in the mildest thoughts,
l arm the minds of infants to exclaims.

* * * * *

heavens, can you hear a good man groan,
l not relent, or not compassion him?
rcus, attend him in his ecstacy,
t hath more scars of sorrow in his heart
n foemen's marks upon his batter'd shield;
yet so just, that he will not revenge:
enge the heavens for old Andronicus.

The above is Shaksperian in the spirit of preceding and future examples. God is said to will revenge, and God on all occasions will be solicited for revenge. Titus' inveighing, turned into English, is 'O great ruler of the universe, how slow you are to hear, how slow to see wickedness.' Marcus, who again reproves him, yet admits that his miseries would make the mildest revolt against heaven, asks Titus to kneel and record a vow of vengeance against his enemies; and when Titus goes, he indulges in the upbraiding impiety of his brother, and casts a sort of reflection by comparison on the heavens, saying Titus is too just to revenge, and calling on the heavens to revenge. Did Shakspere, in his philosophy, think it unjust to punish gross offenders, as he exemplifies in the Two Gentlemen of Verona, Measure for Measure, and Cymbeline? Yet he evidences in his works great disregard for human life, killing those who do not merit it, and whom it is quite unnecessary to kill. We must, therefore, ascribe much of these remarks of his to satire on justice here and hereafter. This is Shakspere, over and over again, in his reflections upon Providence.

The boy Lucius brings presents of arms from Andronicus to Chiron and Demetrius, with a verse of Horace round them, expressing his knowledge of their guilt. While greeting them from Andronicus, the child says aside, 'pray the Roman gods confound them both.' The Empress is in labour, and one of her sons says—

> Come, let us go, and pray to all the gods
> For our beloved mother in her pains.
>
> *Aaron.* Pray to the devils; the gods have given us over.

This is a specimen how Aaron, the atheist, talks of religion in the style of Richard III., and he will kill the nurse in much the same style, who brings him his child to put to death.

The nurse enters with a blackamoor child, the offspring of Aaron, by the Empress.

> *Aaron.* Well, God give her good rest!
> What hath he sent her?
>
> *Nurse.* A devil.
>
> *Aar.* Why, then she is the devil's dam: a joyful issue.

The nurse thinks the contrary, and says to Aaron—

> The Empress sends it thee, thy stamp, thy seal;
> And bids thee christen it with thy dagger's point.
>
> *Aaron.* Out, out, you whore! is black so base a hue?
> Sweet blowse, you are a beauteous blossom sure.

As they are not any of them Christians; and if they may be supposed, as was likely, to be acquainted with that faith, the allusion to christening is putting in the mouths of pagans a sarcasm on Christianity. Here at once Shakspere elicits a noble quality, a redeeming touch, in the character of Aaron, which, coupled with bravery, and the justness of the sentiments, make the reader sympathise for a moment with the man. Demetrius says—

> I'll broach the tadpole on my rapier's point:
> Nurse, give it me, my sword shall soon dispatch it.
> *Aaron.* Sooner this sword shall plough thy bowels up.
> Stay, murtherous villains, will you kill your brother?
> *Demetrius.* Wilt thou betray thy noble mistress thus?
> *Aar.* My mistress is my mistress; this, myself;
> The vigour, and the picture of my youth:
> This, before all the world, do I prefer;
> This, maugre all the world, will I keep safe,
> Or some of you shall smoke for it in Rome.
> *Chiron.* I blush to think upon this ignomy.
> *Aar.* Why, there's the privilege your beauty bears:
> Fie, treacherous hue! that will betray with blushing
> The close enacts and counsels of the heart:
> Here's a young lad fram'd of another leer.
> Look, how the black slave smiles upon the father;
> As who should say, 'Old lad, I am thine own.'
> He is your brother, lords; sensibly fed
> Of that self-blood that first gave life to you:
> And, from that womb, where you imprison'd were,
> He is enfranchised and come to light:
> Nay, he's your brother by the surer side,
> Although my seal be stamped in his face.

The love of offspring natural to all mankind, as strong in the black as in the white, is here made stronger in the Moor father than in the Gothic mother. Shakspere, as Sir Charles Morgan, appears to explain the philosophy of parental love in the father as consisting in egotism, as arising from the

first feeling of being a father and having a son, rather than in the after consideration which ensues through these relations. Nevertheless, Aaron's paternal feelings overpower all other interests of the present, make him forget all else in seeing what is—and in the prospect of what will be his other self, he at once becomes a philanthropist, draws the moral between the species, is sarcastic on the white lords, while he elevates, by comparison, the black and brown slaves of the creation. Twice he says of it to Chiron and Demetrius, 'he is your brother,' and, in his language and sentiments, reminds the reader of Shylock comparing Jews to Christians, of Prospero's comparison between the spirit and himself. On this comparison Aaron founds the conduct they should pursue, and pleads for a common humanity.

He leaves the Empress to fly to the Goths, and leads, as he describes, a miserable life with them for the sake of his son, whom, he says, has driven him to these shifts, but whom he hopes to see a commander of a camp. Thus he does not quit the character of a hater of Rome and of humanity. But what Christian slave-proprietor of the present day would feel and act towards his mixed progeny on his estate, as Aaron does towards his offspring? The reader will also find, in the Merchant of Venice, that Shakspere makes Shylock taunt the Christians as sellers of their own flesh in slaves.

Titus, Marcus, young Lucius, and others, assemble to shoot, and Titus bears arrows with letters on them. Publius speaks—

> Pluto sends you word,
> If you will have revenge from hell, you shall:
> Marry, for Justice, she is so employ'd,
> He thinks, with Jove in heaven, or somewhere else,
> So that perforce you must needs stay a time.
>
> *Titus.* He doth me wrong, to feed me with delays;
> I'll dive into the burning lake below,
> And pull her out of Acheron by the heels.—
> Marcus, we are but shrubs, no cedars we:
> No big-bon'd men, framed of the Cyclops' size
> But metal, Marcus; steel to the very back:
> Yet wrung with wrongs, more than our backs can bear:
> And sith there is no justice in earth nor hell,
> We will solicit heaven; and move the gods,

To send down justice for to wreak our wrongs:
Come, to this gear. You are a good archer, Marcus.
Ad Jovem, that's for you:—Here, *ad Apollinem*:—
Ad Martem, that's for myself;—
Here, boy, to Pallas;—Here, to Mercury:
To Saturn, Caius, not to Saturnine,—
You were as good to shoot against the wind.—
To it, boy. Marcus, loose when I bid:
O'my word, I have written to effect;
There's not a god left unsolicited.

The spirit of these ideas is reproduced throughout the author's plays. Titus says they are but men, and not 'Cyclops;' the commentators quote Macrobius: *impia gens deos negans*—an impious people denying the gods. If not in physical, in moral powers of opposition—in the fight of blasphemy—the family and friends of Andronicus had arrived at an equality with the giants.

Having mocked divinity in general, Shakspere even descends to some particulars of modern religion, which he scoffs at. The gay must succeed the grave, and the everlasting clown must come in to joke at the expense of religion by his ignorant 'mistakes' and 'misplaces.' He enters with a basket and two pigeons.

Titus. News, news from heaven! Marcus, the post is come.
Sirrah, what tidings? have you any letters?
Shall I have justice? what says Jupiter?

Clown. Ho! the gibbet-maker? he says, that he hath taken them down again, for the man must not be hanged till the next week.

Tit. But what says Jupiter, I ask thee.

Clo. Alas, sir, I know not Jupiter; I never drank with him in all my life.

Tit. Why, villain, art thou not the carrier?

Clo. Ay, of my pigeons, sir; nothing else.

Tit. Why, did'st thou not come from heaven?

Clo. From heaven? alas, sir, I never came there. God forbid, I should be so bold to press to heaven in my young days. Why, I am going with my pigeons to the tribunal plebs, to take up a matter of brawl, betwixt my uncle and of the Imperial's men.

Mar. Why, sir, that is as fit as can be, to serve for your oration and let him deliver the pigeons to the emperor from you.

Tit. Tell me, can you deliver an oration to the emperor with a grace?

Clo. Nay, truly, sir, I could never say grace in all my life.

Tit. Sirrah, come hither; make no more ado,
But give your pigeons to the emperor:
By me thou shalt have justice at his hands.
Hold, hold; meanwhile, here's money for thy charges.
Give me a pen and ink.—
Sirrah, can you with a grace deliver a supplication?

Clo. Ay, sir.

Tit. Then here is a supplication for you. And when you come to him, at the first approach, you must kneel; then kiss his foot; then deliver up your pigeons; and then look for your reward. I'll be at hand: see that you do it bravely.

Clo. I warrant you, sir; let me alone.

Tit. Sirrah, hast thou a knife? Come, let me see it.
Here, Marcus, fold it in the oration;
For thou hast made it like an humble suppliant:
And when thou hast given it to the emperor,
Knock at my door, and tell me what he says.

Clo. God be with you, sir; I will.

In the apprehension of the Clown, Providence has only to do with capital punishments. It is to be inferred, by his ridicule and his example, that there were many simple men among the lower orders in Shakspere's time as in ours, who never troubled their heads at all about religion. Shakspere was the poet of nature, and would be more literally so in his youth. We might suppose, with a change of names, we were reading the questions and answers of the commissioners sent into the factories and mines to inquire into the amount of the religious knowledge of the people. Instead of mock prayers, the above is an impious matter-of-fact appeal to heaven, and a satire on Providence. There are some persons who require this clown's test of divinity. If force of repetition can make Shakspere to be Shakspere, the joke upon grace is his. Could Aristophanes in any scene have more girded the gods? From such writings the Greek poet was considered by his critics—J. Leclere and Ant. Muret—to have been an atheist. We have such a scene in Cymbeline delivered with more ridicule; but, in the above, there is invective and abuse. What such language and such con-

duct was towards the gods, may be gathered in the judgment passed upon it by the Emperor. What tells against himself, may be considered as telling equally against the gods, against whom Titus directed his missives. Saturninus says—

> Why, lords, what wrongs are these? Was ever seen
> An emperor of Rome thus overborne,
> Troubled, confronted thus: and, for the extent
> Of legal justice, us'd in such contempt?
> My lords, you know, as do the mightful gods
> However these disturbers of our peace
> Buzz in the people's ears, there nought hath pass'd
> But even with law, against the wilful sons
> Of old Andronicus. And what an if
> His sorrows have so overwhelm'd his wits,
> Shall we be thus afflicted in his wreaks,
> His fits, his frenzy, and his bitterness?
> And now he writes to heaven for his redress:
> See, here's to Jove, and this to Mercury;
> This to Apollo; this to the god of war:
> Sweet scrolls to fly about the streets of Rome!
> What's this, but libelling against the senate,
> And blazoning our injustice everywhere?
> A goodly humour, is it not, my lords?
> As who would say, in Rome no justice were.
> But, if I live, his feign'd ecstacies
> Shall be no shelter to these outrages:
> But he and his shall know, that justice lives
> In Saturninus' health; whom, if she sleep,
> He'll so awake, as she in fury shall
> Cut off the proud'st conspirator that lives.

Jupiter, in Cymbeline, rebuking the accusing spirits, will remind the reader of the situation of Saturninus, and this speech put into his mouth.

Saturninus calls things by their right names. The speeches and 'libelling' of the Andronici were more religious than political—and 'libelling' might have been written 'blasphemous.'

The Clown salutes the Emperor in the name of God and St. Stephen: was it in ridicule of that martyr and the fate which awaited the poor clown, who fancied Jupiter, the gibbet-maker, had postponed hanging for a week, when, for no offence, the gallows were waiting for him?

Saturninus. Go, take him away, and hang him presently.

Clown. How much money must I have?

Tamora. Come, sirrah, you must be hang'd.

Clo. Hang'd! by'r lady, then I have brought up a neck to a fair end.

This is an instance of Shakspere's indifference to the death of inferior persons, which Johnson calls 'innocent mediocrity.'

Aaron, discovered with his child by a Goth, is brought to Lucius. Lucius would have the child hanged in the father's sight 'to vex his soul,' and afterwards hang the Moor. The Moor, nothing daunted by a view of his own approaching death, pleads for the life of the child, and promises that Lucius shall hear of something to his advantage, but adds—

> If thou wilt not, befall what may befall,
> I'll speak no more; but vengeance rot you all!

This is something like Iago's end. Lucius was not improved by experience, when he would victimise the innocent to his vengeance. To make the sequel and the moral consistent with the commencement of his career, Lucius would perpetrate this fresh cruelty, and Aaron memorialises his sense of religion.

Lucius. Tell on thy mind; I say thy child shall live.

Aaron. Swear that he shall, and then will I begin.

Luc. Who should I swear by? thou believ'st no God:
That granted, how can'st thou believe an oath?

Aar. What if I do not? as, indeed, I do not:
Yet, for I know thou art religious,
And hast a thing within thee called conscience,
With twenty Popish tricks and ceremonies
Which I have seen thee careful to observe,
Therefore I urge thy oath; for that I know
An idiot holds his bauble for a God,
And keeps the oath which by that God he swears,
To that I'll urge him;—therefore thou shalt vow
By that same God, what God soe'er it be,
That thou ador'st and hast in reverence,
To save my boy, nourish and bring him up,
Or else I will discover nought to thee.

Luc. Ev'n by my God I will swear to thee, I will.

Here is an open profession of atheism. Religion, con-

science, tricks, and ceremonies, are all put together, and their relation to all religion pointed at by calling them 'Popish.' When the characters were pagans, who would have done this but Shakspere? Is not the irony of an oath Shakspere's? This characterisation of tricks and baubles, and calling the believer in them an idiot, is a cast of the speech of Theseus, in Midsummer Night's Dream. Lucius asks Aaron—

> Art thou not sorry for these heinous deeds?
>
> *Aaron.* Ay, that I had not done a thousand more.
> Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things,
> As willingly as one would kill a fly;
> And nothing grieves me heartily indeed,
> But that I cannot do ten thousand more.
>
> *Luc.* Bring down the devil, for he must not die
> So sweet a death as hanging presently.
>
> *Aar.* If there be devils, would I were a devil,
> To live and burn in everlasting fire,
> So I might have your company in hell,
> But to torment you with my bitter tongue!
>
> *Luc.* Sirs, stop his mouth, and let him speak no more.

Killing flies is again made a comparison with his own commission of cruelties, as it was with the tyranny of men by Andronicus, and as it is with the tyranny of the gods towards men by Gloster, in Lear. Aaron himself, in the utterance of avowed blasphemy, gives us the meaning of the 'bitter tongue' of Andronicus. Shakspere was the person who ought to have stopped Aaron's mouth earlier, and not have allowed the rest to ease their stomachs with their bitter tongues.

Tamora as Revenge, and her two sons as Rape and Murder, come to Titus.

> *Titus.* Good Lord, how like the Empress' sons they are,
> And you the Empress! but we worldly men
> Have miserable and mistaking eyes.

Lucius ends religiously as he began, ordering the funerals of the rest, and denying burial to Tamora. He says this will be a want of pity, like her want of pity. Thus the conclusion puts into the mouth of Lucius the moral to the

play which he had enacted—the want of pity and the power of superstition. There is a 'judgment here' which falls alike on all parties—the heaviest on the pious Andro nicus, and the lightest, perhaps, upon the atheist.

Lucius enters triumphantly into Rome a second time, and with a son of Tamora, by Aaron. He calls the Moor unhallowed slave, irreligious, misbelieving. Lucius tells the child to shed some tears over his grandfather.

> Because kind nature doth require it so;
> Friends should associate friends in grief and woe.

Had he followed the dictates of nature at first, there had not been cause for so many tears. He then passes sentence on the Moor.

> *Lucius.* Set him breast deep in earth, and famish him;
> There let him stand, and rave and cry for food:
> If any one relieves or pities him,
> For the offence he dies. This is our doom:
> Some stay, to see him fasten'd in the earth.
>
> *Aaron.* O, why should wrath be mute, and fury dumb?
> I am no baby, I, that, with base prayers,
> I should repent the evils I have done;
> Ten thousand, worse than ever yet I did,
> Would I perform, if I might have my will;
> If one good deed in all my life I did,
> I do repent it from my very soul.

This is addressed to God. Is it not a satire on religious phraseology? Titus serves up Tamora's sons in a pie to be eaten by her, in imitation of the ancient fable, and thus addresses Saturninus:—

> My lord the emperor, resolve me this;
> Was it well done of rash Virginius,
> To slay his daughter with his own right hand,
> Because she was enforc'd, stain'd, and deflour'd?
>
> *Saturninus.* It was, Andronicus.
>
> *Titus.* Your reason, mighty lord?
>
> *Sat.* Because the girl should not survive her shame,
> And by her presence still renew his sorrows.
>
> *Tit.* A reason mighty, strong, and effectual,
> A pattern, precedent, and lively warrant,
> For me, most wretched, to perform the like.

Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee;
And with thy shame thy father's sorrow die!
[*He kills her.*

Sat. What hast thou done, unnatural and unkind?

Tit. Kill'd her, for whom my tears have made me blind.
I am as woful as Virginius was,
And have a thousand times more cause than he
To do this outrage; and it is now done.

We see Shakspere fulfilling the malice of Aaron, and pursuing, by wholesale destruction, the work of retributive justice. Lucius, who would not spare the son of Tamora, is obliged to grant life to the second son of the man who had punished him so severely for the denial of it to the first. As in the speech of Macbeth, there is a responsibility to man taught; every one recommends 'the ingredients of the poisoned chalice to their own lips;' but there is no responsibility to Deity taught. The idea of hell is treated with the greatest contempt. Cobbett once wrote—'Does not every man at once see that it would create the greatest wickedness if we raised the cry "Holloa, boys, there is no hell."' Has not Shakspere raised this cry, and re-echoed it throughout this play? What Posidonius said of Epicurus, may be said of Shakspere—'He brought in the gods to make merry at their expense.'

We cannot see in Eschylus anything so impious as we have pointed out in this drama. Yet he was condemned to be stoned, because he did not pay sufficient respect to the religion of his country in his tragedies. He was only pardoned because he had lost a hand in the service of his country. Euripides was also considered an atheist by his contemporaries. Aristophanes introduces a shopman, who says, 'Since Euripides persuaded men by his *impious verses*, that there were no gods, I sell no more crowns.' Yet it would be still more difficult to find impiety in Euripides equal to that which has come under our notice. Plutarch attributes to Euripides the system of atheism, which, he says, 'he caused to be uttered on the stage. Not daring to give his own opinion, because he feared the Areopagus, he *insinuated it* in introducing Sisyphus upon the stage.' Plutarch took the common-sense view of the subject, that

the author sympathised with the atheist he delineated. It did not signify what the character was, good or bad—acknowledging gods, or totally denying them; there were the ideas, and no critic thought of saying they belonged to the character—to Sisyphus and not to Euripides. Certainly it was intended as a blind to the vulgar, and as a legal defence; but that does not make the truth of things less clear to moral, religious, and philosophical judges.

The sort of atheism to be found in Titus Andronicus, and other plays of Shakspere—the doubts, invective, and abuse indulged in with regard to the divinity, in the century in which Shakspere lived, had been an historical fact. One Haguet, an English sectary of the sixteenth century, made the following prayer in dying, which we translate from the Latin:—'God of heaven, most powerful Jehovah, the alpha and omega of the universe, king of kings; eternal god! deliver me from the hands of my enemies: anything less, I will climb up to the heavens, and drag you from your throne, I will tear you to pieces with my hands.' This man could not have believed in God, or entertained any religion. Such language shows essentially the same want of reverence that is so observable in the reproaches of our poet.

A book of the seventeenth century, which bore the title 'Cymbalum mundi,' under the guise of stories and pagan divinities, was thought not to treat with proper respect religion and divinity in general. The book was condemned by the Sorbonne, and burnt. The following were the reflections of the critics upon it, which apply equally well to Shakspere. Voet observes, 'It is possible for a man to instil atheism into works of *pleasantry* and full of *fiction*, and might serve himself with this ruse, in order that if he was pursued, he might escape from his pursuers.' Theoph. Spiyelius, 1663, in his search after atheism, says, the author of the 'Cymbalum mundi,' under the veil of mythology, appears to wish to reject those things which we say and believe to be most true concerning God. Another, Pasquier, in the first volume of his letters: 'The Cymbalum mundi is a *Lucianism*, which deserves to be cast into the fire, with its author, if he was living.' Lucianism—how exactly does the word suit the same sort of productions in Shakspere.

Rousseau, in his Emile, in the profession of faith of the Savoyard vicar, says, 'What is most injurious to divinity is not the not thinking of it, but the thinking badly of it.' This was nothing new, but had been said by Plutarch and Bacon before Rousseau. The one may be passive atheism, but the other is atheism indulging in blasphemy.

The religious consequences of such a play as Titus Andronicus, must be acknowledged to be such as were depicted by the critic on Moliere's Festin de Pierre. The following scene is from that play; in its denial of Providence through the miseries of men and its exaltation of humanity, strikingly resembles Shakspere.

Don Juan meets a poor man in the forest, and asks him how he passes his life.

Poor Man. To pray God for the good people who give me alms.

Don Juan. You pass your life in praying to God; in that case you ought to be very much at your ease.

Poor Man. Alas! sir; I often havn't what to eat.

Don Juan (with irony). That cannot be. God would not leave to die of hunger those who pray to him morning and night: come, here's a louis! but I give it you for the love of humanity.'

This scene was suppressed on its second representation.



TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

THERE are several religious expressions in the Two Gentlemen of Verona, introduced in the service of love or on trivial occasions. Irreverence is rather to be inferred from such passages. Shakspere's indecency in female conversation, goes along with it. We may say with Johnson, of these and other extracts—'When I read this play, I cannot but think that I discover, both in the serious and ludicrous scenes, the language and sentiments of Shakspeare.'

Proteus says—

> Commend thy grievance to my holy prayers,
> For I will be thy bead's-man, Valentine.
>
> *Valentine.* And on a love-book pray for my success.
>
> *Pro.* Upon some book I love, I'll pray for thee.

Pope says, the second scene 'is composed of the lowest and most trifling conceits.' Johnson allows that it 'is mean and vulgar.' Dr. Henley accuses Shakspere, in his wit upon strayed sheep, of having derived the dialogue from sacred sources.

> *Launce.* I have received my proportion, like the prodigious son, and am going with Sir Proteus to the Imperial's court.

This witticism of Launce on the prodigal son, the reader will hereafter see, is a favourite one with Shakspere. The humour, also, is peculiarly the author's; and is described by himself in this play and in Measure for Measure.

As Speed says to Launce, on one occasion 'he mistakes him,' and on another, 'Well, your old vice still; mistake the word.' Escalus characterises it still better, when he says to Angelo of Elbow, 'Do you hear how he misplaces?' Shakspere will make these mistakes a frequent vehicle of

profanation. We are to suppose that the dog, Crab, was Launce's 'proportion.'

Launce. Thou shalt never get such a secret from me, but by a parable.

Launce having used a parable, and shown his knowledge of the Scriptures, says he unravels his meaning by that figure of speech.

Launce. Why, I tell thee, I care not though he burn himself in love. If thou wilt go with me to the ale-house, so; if not, thou art an Hebrew, a Jew, and not worth the name of a Christian.

Speed. Why?

Laun. Because thou hast not so much charity in thee as to go to the ale-house with a Christian. Wilt thou go?

Speed. At thy service.

Having put the Gospel under contribution, does not Shakspere draw from the epistle of Paul for these two illustrations he gives to Launce, of burning in love and Christian charity? No doubt the common people speak of a Christian as a human creature. But Shakspere knew better, and employs here the name and nature of a Christian to no good purpose, and will often do it to produce ridicule. Launce, in love, says of the object of his affection—

She hath more qualities than a water-spaniel—which is much in a bare Christian.

Proteus and Valentine hold a notable dialogue.

Proteus. Valentine——
Valentine. No.
Pro. Who then? his spirit?
Val. Neither.
Pro. What then?
Val. Nothing.
Laun. Can nothing speak? Master, shall I strike?
Pro. Whom would'st thou strike?
Laun. Nothing.
Pro. Villain, forbear.
Laun. Why, sir, I'll strike nothing. I pray you——

We should not have given the above extract, had it not appeared to us from its frequent repetition, and more serious



application in other places to denote the materialism of Shakspere. Besides, we think it a parody of some of the scene with the Ghost in Hamlet.

Valentine. And as we walk along, I dare be bold
With our discourse to make your grace to smile.
What think you of this page, my lord?

Duke. I think the boy hath grace in him: he blushes.

Val. I warrant you, my lord, more grace than boy.

Duke. What mean you by that saying?

In subsequent plays the reader will find frequent recurrence to the word 'grace,' as a subject of witticism.

There cannot be well a worse character than Proteus, who betrays Valentine in order to make love to Silvia, his friend's betrothed; rejects his own Julia, and finding only hatred from Silvia, would force her to his will in the presence of Valentine. In his soliloquy on motives, Proteus gives the necessitarian plea as sufficient excuse to leave the paths of virtue, and walk in the ways of vice. When discovered by Valentine, he says—

Proteus. My shame and guilt confounds me.
Forgive me, Valentine; if hearty sorrow
Be a sufficient ransom for offence,
I tender't here; I do as truly suffer,
As e'er I did commit.

Valentine. Then I am paid:
And once again I do receive thee honest.
Who by repentance is not satisfy'd,
Is nor of heav'n, nor earth; for these are pleas'd;
By penitence th' Eternal's wrath's appeas'd.
And that my love may appear plain and free,
All that was mine in Silvia, I give thee.

Proteus had joined himself to outlaws, who were bandits. According to their own account, they had been guilty of the crimes of robbery and murder, and such like 'petty offences.' Valentine, reconciled to the Duke, obtains their pardon, as men 'endued with worthy qualities; and forgiven, fit for great employments.'

Mr. Knight, on this occasion, cannot let pass unobserved the charge against Shakspere of giving encouragement to

evil doers. He gives the other instances, of which the moral of this play is but one, and defends Shakspere by remarks, with the tenor of which we can readily coincide as respects the universal love with which our poet regarded his fellows, and his charity and pity towards their offences. But it is observable, that whilst Shakspere's sympathies seem to go along with characters moved by violent feelings, either of virtue or vice, he shows an unaccountable antipathy to persons of more even temperament, which seems to us to determine the tendency of his own inclinations. Thus there was nothing positively to abhor in the character of Thurio; there was comparatively no moral wrong in him, if there was no virtue shown; he was as most men are in the same situations—yet the only severity of judgment is shown to him.

Not only are the sentiments of the play made expressive of the forgiveness of injuries between man and man, pointing to what ought to be in heaven as well as earth, but in the sequel it is managed that the highest judge should pardon all offenders alike, and to all sinners there should be one mutual happiness.

It is the moral of this play which marks it as Shakspere's. He assigns forgiveness of all injuries done to man, and of all sins against heaven. On repentance there are no punishments, only rewards; and friendship is all self-sacrifice in the fulfilment of the duties of charity.

PERICLES.

THE hypothesis that Pericles was derived from a poem by Gower, and an old court play, and patched up by Shakspere, may account for some incongruities in it. The politics, the obscenity and profanity, seem to have come from the hand of Shakspere. There is as strong political satire in Pericles as in any of Shakspere's plays, which is an answer to Johnson's dictum—that Shakspere could not supply 'faction with invective.' But it will be easy to particularise other sentiments which are common to all his plays.

In the following sentiments of Pericles, there is a touch of Shakspere's universal charity, as practically inefficient towards man, as it is indignant towards the gods.

> The blind mole casts
> Copp'd hills towards heaven, to tell, the earth is throng'd
> By man's oppression; and the poor worm doth die for't.
> Kings are earth's gods: in vice, their law 's their will;
> And if Jove stray, who dares say, Jove doth ill?

The circumstance here complained of being in the nature of things, seems to imply that the author did think the world in a desperate and unredeemable condition. If he condemned the system, because of the existence of evil, he must have condemned the disposer of events, or he did not think that there was one. It involves the dilemma of Epicurus—'He either desires to remove evil but cannot, or he can but will not.' Marina is given a delicate sensibility; not only averse to do any wrong to the animal creation, but weeping over the wrongs she commits from inevitable necessity. As with Miranda, in the Tempest, this sentiment is made to reflect on the heavenly powers, who do not exert their puissance to prevent this misery. Pericles is represented as a good character. The misanthrope, Jaques, against whom something may be said, turns the same sentiment much to the same account as the Prince of Tyre. Shakspere is said to em-

brace a physiological error in the well-known passage, that a worm suffers as much as a giant. It is to be hoped that he is not correct; but there seems to be the same intention to represent, or misrepresent, if he were better informed, the state of torment and mutual destruction arising from the system of things. That these sentiments have a philosophical rather than a moral intention, we argue from the fact, that they cannot be reduced to practice. We cannot leave reptiles, vermin, or beasts, in possession of the soil, though Pericles says it is oppression to remove them, and his daughter cries at it, and Jaques says they have as much right to it as we have; and Andronicus affirms even flies to have mental feelings similar to our own. It will be observed from these and other instances, that Shakspere would elevate the beast-scale, or reduce us to a level with the animal. The analogy in the lines quoted, and elsewhere, seems to run thus—we do to the rest of the creation as the gods do to us—the animals have no redress against us; we have none against the gods. This is all the consolation Shakspere can give us.

As a farmer, Shakspere must have made war against moles and worms; his works even show an appreciation of field sports. We think, therefore, that he meant no more than the philosophy of the sentiment indicated. In the above extract, there is a satire on our vain appeals to heaven, and likening human oppressors to the gods; and also a political satire in the two last lines. The manner, as well as the matter, is irreverent.

On Pericles leaving his kingdom to the care of Helicanus, he gives Shakspere's usual remark on the sanction of religion to oaths, in the intercourse between men:—

> *I'll take thy word for faith, not ask thine oath;*
> Who shuns not to break one, will sure crack both.

He does not leave oaths here, but goes into a laboured exemplification of them, and would show how the good and bad act irrespectively of them. The former fulfil their duty, and the latter their crimes, in spite of them. If any guarantee, they are made a guarantee of wickedness.

The prince departs on his travels, and by the arrival of his ship, relieves Tharsus from famine. The governor, in

conversation with his wife, had ascribed this famine to heaven; but represented as a pair of hypocritical villains, they, with their court, fall on their knees before Pericles, and offer religion to him.

All. The gods of Greece protect you!
And we'll pray for you.
Pericles. Rise, I pray you, rise!
We do not look for reverence, but for love,
And harbourage for ourself, our ships, and men.

Pericles leaves his daughter, Marina, to their care; Cleon calls down the vengeance of the gods on himself and his, if he neglects the charge.

Pericles. I believe you;
Your honour and your goodness teach me credit,
Without your vows.

Pericles is no sooner gone, than Dionyza commits Marina to Leonine to be killed. She is particular in recalling to the murderer remembrance of his oath to do it.

Leonine. I'll do't; but yet she is a *goodly* creature.
Dionyza. The fitter then the gods should have her.

An impious remark which Richard the Third repeats. The murderer is religious. He addresses Marina, whom he is about to murder.

Leonine. Come, say your prayers speedily
Marina. What mean you?
Leon. If you require a little space for prayer,
I grant it: pray; but be not tedious,
For the gods are quick of ear, and I am sworn
To do my work with haste.
Mar. Why will you kill me?
Leon. To satisfy my lady.
Mar. Why would she have me kill'd?
Now, as I can remember, by my troth,
I never did her hurt in all my life;
I never spake bad word, nor did ill turn
To any living creature: believe me, la,
I never kill'd a mouse, nor hurt a fly:
I trod upon a worm against my will,
But I wept for it.

Marina does not accept the offer of 'space for prayer,' but, as Leonine says, wants 'to reason of the deed.' She is

given no idea of a present God of help, to whom she might turn, or a future state, where her innocence would meet with reward, and those guilty of her death would be punished. The conversation of certain characters in the brothel of Mitylene cannot be repeated, but the wit is often directed against religion. It is acknowledged by the frequenters of the place, that Marina would reason them into virtue. Such wanton jests are passed as make it difficult not to laugh at the pictures of piety which the wicked there draw of the converted.

Mention is often made of the gods. The evil that comes is of their sending, and they are thanked for good; but they are as often reproached for the part they play in the economy of the universe, and sometimes neglected, by their power being ascribed to other causes. Gower, who acts as chorus, refers events to 'necessity' and 'fortune.' The following are specimens of the philosophy and materialism, the piety and impiety, put into the mouth of the Tyrian prince. Pericles appears wet by the sea-side of Pentapolis.

> *Pericles.* Yet cease your ire, ye angry stars of heaven!
> Wind, rain, and thunder, remember, earthly man
> Is but a substance that must yield to you;
> And I, as fits my nature, do obey you;
> Alas, the sea hath cast me on the rocks,—
> Wash'd me from shore to shore, and left me breath
> Nothing to think on, but ensuing death:
> Let it suffice the greatness of your powers,
> To have bereft a prince of all his fortunes;
> And having thrown him from your wat'ry grave,
> Here to have death in peace, is all he'll crave.

Reflecting on the changes of adversity and prosperity in his own person, he says,—

> Whereby I see that *Time*'s the king of men,
> For he's their parent, and he is their grave,
> And gives them what he will, not what they crave.

Married to a daughter of King Simonides, he loses her at sea. He addresses the waves from the ship,—

> Thou God of this great vast, rebuke these surges,
> Which wash both heaven and hell; and thou, that hast
> Upon the winds command, bind them in brass,
> Having call'd them from the deep!

Immediately after this, he says:—

> O you gods!
> Why do you make us love your goodly gifts,
> And snatch them straight away? We, here below,
> Recall not what we give, and therein may
> Vie honour with yourselves.

No blasphemy can well exceed this in giving superiority to man over God. In the speech on moles, men, and gods, they were compared together. Here men are made superior to gods in charity. The animus seems to be the same here as there, and could never have been written by a believer.

> *Pericles.* We cannot but obey
> The powers above us. Could I rage and roar
> As doth the sea she lies in, yet the end
> Must be as 'tis.

On finding his daughter alive, he exclaims:—

> O, I am mock'd,
> And thou by some incensed god sent hither
> To make the world laugh at me.
>
> * * * * * *
>
> O Helicanus, strike me, honour'd sir;
> Give me a gash, put me to present pain;
> Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me,
> O'erbear the shores of my mortality,
> And drown me with their sweetness. O come hither,
> Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget:
> Thou that wast born at sea, buried at Tharsus,
> And found at sea again! O Helicanus,
> Down on thy knees, thank the holy gods as loud
> As thunder threatens us. This is Marina.
> What was thy mother's name? tell me but that,
> For truth can never be confirm'd enough,
> Though doubts did ever sleep.

On the restoration of his wife, he adds:—

> This, this: no more, you gods! your present kindness
> Makes my past miseries sport: you shall do well,
> That on the touching of her lips I may
> Melt, and no more be seen. O come, be buried
> A second time within these arms.

In the second of these last quotations is the sentiment so common to Shakspere's characters, that the misfortunes of men are the sport of the gods. It would be difficult to say whence a religious man could have derived such an idea, or what man would utter it not intending disrespect. The idea seems renewed in the other speeches, when under the apprehension of prosperity. Pericles begs for suffering in order to anticipate ill, that the good may not become another loss. There was a belief of antiquity, that something of a balance was struck between prosperity and adversity; hence we find Crœsus, in Herodotus, fearing the latter from the excess of the former. But there was more than this opinion in the instance of Pericles. The plain statement is, that men are the sport of the gods, alternated with good and evil circumstances. This sentiment, and some others, which might be held as only characteristic of profane times, Shakspere has given a turn peculiar to himself, or made them his own by repetition.

There is a physician who restores Thaisa to life—a natural philosopher. He speaks of virtue and science, of the study of nature and of death, to the following effect:—

> *Cerimon.* I held it ever,
> Virtue and cunning were endowments greater
> Than nobleness and riches: careless heirs
> May the two latter darken and expend;
> But immortality attends the former,
> Making a man a god. 'Tis known, I ever
> Have studied physic, through which secret art
> By turning o'er authorities, I have
> (Together with my practice) made familiar
> To me and my aid, the best infusions
> That dwell in vegetives, in metals, stones;
> And I can speak of the disturbances
> That nature works, and of her cures; which give me
> A more content in course of true delight
> Than to be thirsty after tottering honour,
> Or tie my treasure up in silken bags,
> To please the *fool* and *death*.

There are here, we think, allusions to other subjects of religion, which have not their warrant in the play. But this is more evident in this speech of Helicanus.

Helicanus. No, no, my Escanes; know this of me—
Antiochus from incest liv'd not free;
For which, the most high gods not minding longer
To withhold the vengeance that they had in store,
Due to this heinous capital offence;
Even in the height and pride of all his glory,
When he was seated, and his daughter with him,
In a chariot of inestimable value,
A fire from heaven came, and shrivell'd up
Their bodies, even to loathing; for they so stunk,
That all those eyes ador'd them, ere their fall,
Scorn now their hand should give them burial.

Escanes. 'Twas very strange.

Hel. And yet but just; for though
This king were great, his greatness was no guard
To bar heaven's shaft, but sin had his reward.

Esca. 'Tis very fine.

Had not Shakspere in mind the end of Herod, and was there not irony in the observations upon it? The end of Antiochus is represented as a supernatural judgment of heaven, and the ''tis very fine' of Escanes, treats it as a 'trick of the imagination,' or invention, through which he saw—'more strange than true.' Antiochus and his daughter may be dead, but not in the way related, thinks Escanes. Gower enters, saying,—

In Antioch, and his daughter, you have heard
Of monstrous lust the due and just reward:
In Pericles, his queen and daughter, seen
(Although assail'd with fortune fierce and keen)
Virtue preserv'd from fell destruction's blast,
Led on by heaven, and crown'd with joy at last.
In Helicanus may you well descry
A figure of truth, of faith, of loyalty:
In reverend Cerimon there well appears,
The worth that learned charity aye wears.
For wicked Cleon and his wife, when fame
Had spread their cursed deed, and honour'd name
Of Pericles, to rage the city turn;
That him and his they in his palace burn.
The gods for murder seem so content
To punish them; although not done, but meant.
So, on your patience evermore attending,
New joy wait on you. Here our play has ending.



Pericles is a sort of Job. From Shakspere probably following his original, and the moral being pointed out according to the custom of the old play, there is more of what would suit the religious requirements of a Johnson in making virtue in the end rewarded, and vice punished, than in any other play of Shakspere. The poet, when left to himself, followed his own view of things.

KING HENRY VI.—PART I.

In 'purifying' Shakespere, many editors and commentators would leave out this play as not from his pen. One of the reasons may be said to be the same which would not allow the Pucelle d'Orleans to be a work of Voltaire. We have not read the epic of the French poet, but it is understood that Voltaire made it the vehicle of satire upon religion, and of indecency in the supposition of La Pucelle's want of chastity. This attack upon her character, Shakspere in adopting, seems not to have borrowed from English historians—rivalry of nations and of faith might have afforded him the irreligious insinuations, but it appears to us from this coincidence in Voltaire, that a similarity of mind and purpose dictated what they both have said. In the account Hume gives of the Maid of Orleans, though suited to the humanity of his age, the infidel may be detected.

The English duchess Joan seems to be handled with no more mercy than the French Joan: religion, inspiration, miracles, and providence seem to be objects of ridicule in the three plays (Parts I., II., III.) of Henry VI., which therefore presumptively prove them to have proceeded from the same pen. Religion in the virtuous and believing Henry VI., is made as odious and contemptible as in the infidel and wicked Beaufort.

If these be the earliest plays of Shakspere, we think there may be traced in them the rough and coarse outlines of character, which became more complete and more finished in succeeding scenes. The details of subjects introduced with little art, delivered more in the way of narration, become more incidental in other plays—interspersed with more philosophy, and decorated with more poetry.

Henry VI. is a purely religious character, and remains

religious to the end. Richard II. is religious in prosperity, but shaken by adversity, he confesses his want of faith. Henry IV. is a sincere hypocrite, and Richard III. a real one. This is the order in which Shakspere produces these personages. Henry VI. characteristically introduced as Bolingbroke in Richard II., is sustained in the same language and spirit to the last, when he gives his name and period to the play. Most of Shakspere's religious characters are sceptics and philosophers by fits and starts. Shakspere therefore seems, undisguisedly enough, to have attacked religion in his earliest plays, and in later ones to have done it with more design and more art.

The opening dialogue of this play is on the death of Henry V. Bedford commences with a speech compounded of divinity and astrology.

> Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night!
> Comets importing change of times and states,
> Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky;
> And with them scourge the bad revolting stars,
> That have consented unto Henry's death!

When the Bishop of Winchester speaks, he utters striking impiety. In the language of the Bible, he likens the king to a God, and more than a God on account of his victories, and profane are the replies of Gloucester on church, religion, and prayer.

> *Win.* He was a king blessed of the King of kings.
> Unto the French the dreadful judgment-day
> So dreadful will not be, as was his sight.
> The battles of the Lord of hosts he fought:
> The church's prayers made him so prosperous.
> *Glo.* The church! where is it? Had not churchmen prayed,
> His thread of life had not so soon decayed:
> None do you like but an effeminate prince,
> Whom, like a school-boy, you may over-awe.
> *Win.* Gloster, whate'er we like, thou art protector;
> And lookest to command the prince and realm.
> Thy wife is proud; she holdeth thee in awe,
> More than God, or religious churchmen, may.
> *Glo.* Name not religion, for thou lov'st the flesh;
> And ne'er throughout the year to church thou go'st,
> Except it be to pray against thy foes.

The astrologic divine, Bedford, addresses a sort of collect to the ghost of Henry V., the end introducing the star of Pericles:—

> Henry the Fifth! thy ghost I invocate;
> Prosper this realm, keep it from civil broils?
> Combat with adverse planets in the heavens!
> A far more glorious star thy soul will make,
> Than Julius Cæsar, or bright——

The whole of the conversation shows the accustomed irreligion of Shakspere, in transferring profane antiquity from Pericles to Henry VI. This burlesque cannot in excuse be said to be characteristic of the times. The above proves, that under all times and all circumstances, whatever were the exoteric appearances, Shakspere wrote in accordance with the esoteric sentiment of his own mind, and left a palpable sign of his own opinions.

From a variety of passages may be inferred Shakspere's unsatisfactory views of prayer as a channel of communication between man and his Maker. In this play, Henry VI. is represented as full of prayer, sincerely seeking the help of Providence, but without success—and there are several other characters and situations where prayer is not favourably introduced.

Strange enough, with a most Christian people, who were to place their belief in Joan as a messenger from Heaven, Charles begins by appealing to *Mars*. Joan is announced and declares herself in terms received from most histories—the usual incidents of supernaturalism have happened to her. But the one of being *transformed* from a plain into a very beautiful person does not seem so common, but analogous to a particular miracle in the New Testament. Other proofs and declarations seem taken from types which ought not to be re-produced. The trial by combat seems an exception, which, though reverenced in those times, is not now, and is introduced for others to laugh at it and religion. Charles and Pucelle fight—

> *Charles.* Stay, stay thy hands; thou art an Amazon,
> And fightest with the sword of Deborah.
> *Pucelle.* Christ's mother helps me, else I were too weak.
> *Char.* Whoe'er helps thee, 'tis thou that must help me.

To increase the ridicule, Charles immediately makes love to the Pucelle, and the courtiers join in profane and indecent comments not to be repeated.

> *Charles.* Was Mahomet inspired with a dove?
> Thou with an eagle art inspired then.
> Helen, the mother of great Constantine,
> Nor yet Saint Philip's daughters, were like thee.
> Bright star of Venus, fall'n down on the earth,
> How may I reverently worship thee enough?
>
> *Alençon.* Leave off delays, and let us raise the siege.
>
> *Reignier.* Woman, do what thou can'st to save our honours
> Drive them from Orleans, and be immortaliz'd.
>
> *Char.* Presently we'll try:—Come, let's away about it:
> No prophet will I trust, if she prove false.

This curious admixture of false religion and legendary faith, Mahommedan, Christian, and Pagan, has employed the commentators. Charles, who is thus anxious to worship the Pucelle as the goddess of love, flippantly ends by staking his belief in religion on her credit.

The scene changes to London, where religion is again the theme. The wardens of the Tower refuse to let Gloucester in.

> 1 *Servant.* Answer you so the lord protector, villains?
> 1 *Warden.* [*Within.*] The Lord protect him!

The lord protector himself and Cardinal Beaufort speak still less reverentially. Gloucester accuses Beaufort of murdering Henry, of granting indulgences to prostitutes, and threatens violence: to which the cardinal replies—

> Nay, stand thou back, I will not budge a foot;
> This be Damascus, be thou cursed Cain,
> To slay thy brother Abel, if thou wilt.

After some derision of the Pope, Gloucester says that the cardinal cares for neither God nor king. Winchester replies that Gloucester seeks to overthrow religion, and that he (the cardinal) will have his '*heart's-blood*'—on which the mayor observes,—

> I'll call for clubs, if you will not away:—
> This cardinal is more haughty than the devil.

This fierce and brutal spirit allowed to characterise Winchester, is a manifest disparagement of his sacred character.

In the 4th scene of this Act, when Salisbury is shot, he dies exclaiming, in the words of the Service,—

> O Lord, have mercy on us, wretched sinners!

Talbot observes,—

> One of thy eyes, and thy cheek's side struck off!—

and draws, in the name of seriousness, a most comic picture, and consoles him thus:—

> Yet liv'st thou Salisbury? though thy speech doth fail,
> One eye thou hast to look to heaven for grace:
> The sun with one eye vieweth all the world.—
> Heaven be thou gracious to none alive,
> If Salisbury want mercy at thy hands!

The effect of this, though under awful circumstances, is irresistibly ludicrous.

Talbot's religion occurs frequently: he is a pious character: his appeals to the Deity are bold, reproachful, martial, revengeful—his Christianity, except in name, cannot be distinguished from the Paganism of Titus Andronicus, and Pericles.

It is unnecessary to repeat all the mythological nonsense Charles addresses to La Pucelle on the taking of Orleans, whilst he speaks of her as a prophetess and divinity, and makes her the saint of France in place of St. Denis. Charles was not a very worthy descendant of St. Louis, as willing to change his God and his saint on success, as he was ready to disbelieve religion in case of failure. But we suppose this is French levity; it certainly is no higher lesson.

In London (Act II., Scene 2.), we have Mortimer only brought in to give us an example of dying, in what will be found to be the usual Shaksperian style. In a parting address to his keepers, and in a dialogue with his nephew, he speaks in the usual material terms of death; though he had been a prisoner all his life and treats of many points of it, he has no mention of God for the past or present, or of a future state, though he is particular about his funeral. He has never felt the consolations of religion, and no hope beams

over the melancholy scene. The uncle has no spiritual advice to give the nephew, the Plantagenet, whom he makes his heir to civil wars and the same troubled life—the nephew holds out no prospect to his uncle of a better life hereafter. The absence of any thing approaching to religion is the more remarkable, because the release from his imprisonment by death, which Mortimer mentions, and the lump of clay he calls himself, suggest to a Christian the departure of the soul from an abode made of such matter here, to its entire liberty in heaven.

Gloucester and Winchester have an altercation similar to the preceding: at last, in answer to Gloucester's insinuations, the bishop calls him 'irreverend,' which shews at least the term which Shakspere thought appropriate to his conduct. Gloucester said the bishop was not what he professed to be, and the king says he has heard him preach what he does not see him practise, which is a remark Shakspere often makes of the sacred profession. Nor does he lose the opportunity of showing his usual contempt of oaths.

On the reconciliation produced by the king's remarks, Gloucester proffers a truce in these words—

> So help me God, as I dissemble not!
>
> *Winchester.* So help me God, as I intend it not!

Thus our author puts into the mouth of a priest an open mockery of a solemn oath.

Shakspere gives these bloody warriors the language of religion: English and French alike claim Providence in their favour, and assume death in the battle-field to be the best passport to heaven. Bedford dies on the occasion of retaking Rouen, with a speech in his mouth, as if taken from the song by which Simeon proclaimed the presence of the Messiah.

> *Bedford.* Now, quiet soul, depart when heaven please;
> For I have seen our enemies' overthrow.
> What is the trust or strength of foolish man?
> They, that of late were daring with their scoffs,
> Are glad and fain by flight to save themselves.

Let the reader, who may suspect this of being a strained analogy, 'season his admiration but awhile,' until we can

introduce to his notice other parodies upon Holy Writ, of which our author has been convicted, and the analogy in question will cease to seem unlikely.

Alençon says to La Pucelle—

> We'll set thy statue in some holy place,
> And have thee reverenc'd like a blessed saint;
> Employ thee then, sweet virgin, for our good.

Yet this 'blessed saint' is made to mention '*fortune*' as giving her the opportunity of speaking with Burgundy.

Talbot says to his son before the engagement in which they both die—

> Come, side by side together live and die;
> And soul with soul from France to heaven fly.

Himself wounded mortally and his son borne dead before him, he says—

> Thou antic death, which laugh'st us here to scorn,
> Anon, from thy insulting tyranny.
> Coupled in bonds of perpetuity,
> Two Talbots, winged through the lither sky,
> In thy despite, shall 'scape mortality.—

We might leave to the admirers of this reverence for religion, the credit of this doggrel piety, but Knight has a theory, that except at the end of scenes, lines in rhyme are not Shakspere's, and Johnson says—'All this about young Talbot does not belong to the play.' Besides, a general remark that in these rhymes Shakspere renounced his reason, sacrificed sense to sound. We know the sentiment a more Christian writer would impart on the occasion of death. Those who were twain in this life are given the common expectation of Christians, of meeting in another world, which we have frequently to remark never enters the imagination of Shakspere, who by a more brilliant instance than the preceding, could have lent the charms of eloquence and the graces of feeling to the immortality of the soul, instead of being the stern and sombre advocate of the materialism of the grave.

Shakspere is probably true to historical as well as national characteristics, when he paints the English as more pious

than the French, but it cannot be true to character, making so many of both nations treat religion with levity.

Pucelle is introduced praying, not to Jesus, the Virgin, or her patron saint, but to fiends: offering to sell first her body then her soul to them. Here we have an early example of the style in which Shakspere treats all the host of supernaturals so much employed in his plays.

York. Bring forth that sorceress, condemn'd to burn.

Shepherd. Ah, Joan! this kills thy father's heart outright!
Have I sought every country far and near,
And now it is my chance to find thee out.
Must I behold thy timeless, cruel death?
Ah, Joan, sweet daughter, I will die with thee.

Pucelle. Decrepit miser! base ignoble wretch
I am descended of a gentler blood.
Thou art no father, nor no friend of mine.

Shep. Out, out!—my Lords, an please you, 'tis not so;
I did beget her, all the parish knows;
Her mother, living yet, can testify,
She was the first-fruit of my bach'lorship.

Warwick. Graceless, wilt thou deny thy parentage?

York. This argues what her kind of life hath been,
Wicked and vile; and so her death concludes.

Shep. Fie, Joan, that thou wilt be so obstacle.
God knows thou art a collop of my flesh,
And for thy sake have I shed many a tear.
Deny me not, I pray thee, gentle Joan.

Puc. Peasant, avaunt! you have suborned this man,
Of purpose to obscure my noble birth.

Shep. 'Tis true, I gave a noble to the priest,
The morn that I was wedded to her mother.
Kneel down and take my blessing, good my girl.
Wilt thou not stoop? Now cursed be the time
Of thy nativity! I would the milk
Thy mother gave thee when thou suck'dst her breast,
Had been a little ratsbane for thy sake:
Or else, when thou didst keep my lambs a-field,
I wish some rav'nous wolf had eaten thee.
Dost thou deny thy father, cursed drab?
O, burn her, burn her; hanging is too good.

York. Take her away; for she hath liv'd too long,
To fill the world with vicious qualities.

Puc. First, let me tell you whom you have condemn'd:
Not me begotten of a shepherd swain,
But issu'd from the progeny of kings;

Virtuous, and holy; chosen from above,
By inspiration of celestial grace,
To work exceeding miracles on earth.
I never had to do with wicked spirits:
But you,—that are polluted with your lusts,
Stain'd with the guiltless blood of innocents,
Corrupt and tainted with a thousand vices,—
Because you want the grace that others have,
You judge it straight a thing impossible
To compass wonders, but by help of devils.
No, misconceived! Joan of Arc hath been
A virgin from her tender infancy,
Chaste and immaculate in very thought;
Whose maiden blood, thus rigorously effus'd,
Will cry for vengeance at the gates of heaven.

York. Ay, ay; away with her to execution.

War. And hark ye, sirs; because she is a maid,
Spare for no faggots, let there be enough:
Place barrels of pitch upon the fatal stake,
That so her torture may be shortened.

Puc. Will nothing turn your unrelenting hearts?
Then Joan, discover thine infirmity;
That warranteth by law to be thy privilege.
I am with child, ye bloody homicides:
Murder not then the fruit within my womb,
Although ye hale me to a violent death.

York. Now heaven forefend! the holy maid with child?

War. The greatest miracle that e'er ye wrought:
Is all your strict preciseness come to this?

York. She and the dauphin have been juggling:
I did imagine what would be her refuge.

War. Well, go to; we will have no bastards live;
Especially since Charles must father it.

Puc. You are deceiv'd; my child is none of his;
It was Alençon that enjoy'd my love.

York. Alençon! that notorious Machiavel!
It dies, an if it had a thousand lives.

Puc. O, give me leave, I have deluded you;
'Twas neither Charles, not yet the duke I nam'd,
But Reignier, king of Naples, that prevail'd.

War. A married man! that's most intolerable.

York. Why, here's a girl! I think, she knows not well,
There were so many, whom she may accuse.

War. It's sign, she has been liberal and free.

York. And yet, forsooth, she is a virgin pure!
Strumpet, thy words condemn thy brat, and thee:
Use no entreaty, for it is in vain.

Many commentators have objected to Shakspere's treatment of the Maid of Orleans as not becoming to humanity —but was it respectful to religion?

Pucelle represented as having no common father or mother, as being descended from the royal stock of the country, under inspiration of celestial grace, working miracles ascribed to devils, are so many points of resemblance to sacred story, as to admit little doubt of intentional imitation. Indeed this is evidenced in the preceding dialogue. The fear of death making Joan accuse herself of being with child in order to evade her sentence—York and Warwick pass ironical and sceptical comment on the fact of such a miracle in a holy maid and virgin. Joan at last denies herself, curses the country of her enemies with *darkness* and them with *hanging*. A curse that has memorable parallels in sacred writ.

Having in this play, and in others, been ourselves convinced that Shakspere must have had sacred writ in recollection, we will give instances where this is pointed out by commentators on this very play, and we ask whether ours are not as recognisable as theirs?

Pope says of the prayer of Joan beginning 'Charming spells and *periapts*'—*periapts* are charms sowed up, and quotes Ezech. xiii. 18:—'Woe to them that sow pillows to all armholes to hunt souls.' Stevens says it is the boast of Lucifer, in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, 'that he will sit upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north.' Of the curse of Joan, Malone says the expression 'darkness and the gloomy shade of death' is scriptural:—'Whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in "darkness and the shadow of death."' Showing in this scene and those preceding, Shakspere had in mind the very words as well as the facts of scripture.

KING HENRY VI.—PART II.

CERTAINLY Providence is introduced on every occasion in this play, with inferences, from such opposite directions, and with such intentional malice, that the designs, or the sentiments, of the writer cannot possibly be mistaken. King Henry is one of those who refers everything to Providence; which, seemingly, involving contradictions, makes religion ridiculous. Shakspere gives proof of having studied the Bible, particularly in the character of the King; but does he show reverence in his use of its materials? The Cardinal and Richard Plantagenet, afterwards Richard III., are satirical sceptics: the rest are more or less ironical on religion—sometimes material in their thoughts, or frequently indulging in those horrid imprecations which have moved the indignation of religious critics.

It is needless to wade through all the piety put into the King's mouth. Could this coarse and ready-colouring of the Christian character have conveyed a religious impression to the audience, when there was nothing else to make him respected? The grandfather a hypocrite, the father a reformed rake, the line ends in a pious imbecile, who makes his religion a reason for his weakness and the nation's dishonour.

The piety of the King is always *mal à propos* to the event. He thanks God for having given him Margaret, and ends with

> If sympathy of love unite our thoughts;

which was the thing wanting, as she gave her affections to Suffolk, despised her husband, and destroyed Gloster. If swearing by all that is sacred for the worst purposes denotes

a reverential taste, then is our author undoubtedly religious; as these solemn oaths are perpetually in the mouths of the wretched characters of these historical plays.

Salisbury prefaces his political and military observations with

> By the death of him who died for all.

He says of Beaufort:—

> Oft have I seen the haughty Cardinal,
> More like a soldier than a man o' th' church,
> As stout and proud as he were lord of all,
> Swear like a ruffian.

In the First Act we are presented with two dreams, by 'Humphrey' and 'Nell,' so drawn as plainly to refer these phenomena to material causes (as do all physiologists of the present day)—the dream of the Duke being incited by apprehension, and the Duchess's by ambition. Shakspere has admirably described the effect of dreams on different classes of persons.

The Duchess of Gloster, as Saul in the Bible, consults wizards, who 'have,' says the priest Hume—

> Promised to show your highness
> A spirit rais'd from depth of under ground,
> That shall make answer to such questions
> As by your grace shall be propounded him.

On the Duchess giving Hume money, he says—

> Gold cannot come amiss, were she a devil.

Queen Margaret says to Suffolk, of Henry, her husband:

> All his mind is bent to holiness,
> To number Ave-Maries on his beads;
> His champions are the prophets and apostles;
> His weapons holy saws of sacred writ;
> His study is his tilt-yard; and his loves
> Are brazen images of canoniz'd saints.
> I would the college of the cardinals
> Would choose him pope, and carry him to Rome,
> And set the triple crown upon his head;
> That were a state fit for his holiness!

This is a minute description of a religious person, suiting all persuasions, and delivered in contempt of their thoughts, studies, occupations, and amusements. The Duchess says to the Queen:—

Could I come near your beauty with my nails,
I'd set my ten commandments in your face.

Peter, the unjust apprentice, accuses his master of treason, out of spite: the trial of combat is arranged to take place between them in a month. Peter says—

Alas! my lord, I cannot fight; for God's sake pity my case! the spite of man prevaileth against me. O Lord, have mercy upon me! I shall never be able to fight a blow. O Lord, my heart!

The scene changes to the incantation in the presence of the Duchess. The spirits are spoken to under the ground; one of them, Asmath, appears, who is conjured by the 'Eternal God' to answer what they shall ask. He accordingly delivers a string of prophecies which prove true. One of them predicts death to York, who says—

These oracles are hardily attain'd,
And hardly understood.

Not to speak of the resemblance to a similar scene in holy writ, this incantation, as well as that of Joan of Arc, and the introduction of spirits, miracles, trials by combat, which follow one another in these plays, often not at all necessary to the plot, show that the writer (if these were his earliest plays) began in a very matter-of-fact way his discountenance of supernaturalism. Afterwards, when he introduced these things as the machinery of his plays, he with a more refined aim exposed the same delusion; numerous evidences of which may be seen in Macbeth and Hamlet, in the speech of Theseus in Midsummer Night's Dream, in Lear, and All's Well That Ends Well.

The King, the Queen, Gloster, Cardinal, and Suffolk, are out hawking near St. Alban's, when the following conversation takes place between them. The pious Henry analogically remarks, on Gloster's falcon rising above the rest—

See how God in all his creatures works!
Yea, man and birds are fain of climbing high.
Suffolk. No marvel, an it like your majesty,
My lord protector's hawks do tow'r so well;
They know their master loves to be aloft,
And bears his thoughts above his falcon's pitch.
Gloster. My lord, 't is but a base ignoble mind
That mounts no higher than a bird can soar.

Cardinal. I thought as much. He'd be above the clouds.
Glo. Ay, my lord cardinal, how think you by that?
Were it not good your grace could fly to heav'n?
K. Henry. The treasury of everlasting joy!

Surely such sentiments put into the mouth of the pious king, are meant to be as ironical as the expressions of the rest are said in contempt.

On the Cardinal saying that Gloster's treasure is on earth, the Protector and he quarrel, and appoint a place of meeting to fight. The Queen takes part against Gloster, and Henry says—

I pry'thee peace,
Good Queen; and whet not on these furious peers,
For blessed are the peace-makers on earth.
Cardinal. Let me be blessed for the peace I make,
Against this proud protector, with my sword.

Here are introduced the words of Jesus in the sermon on the mount, and a priest is made to scoff at them. Gloster says—

Now, by God's mother, priest, I'll shave your crown for this.

The Cardinal answers in Latin:—

Physician, cure thyself.

There was a conspiracy against Gloster, meant to break out on the occasion of this hawking party; the Cardinal hints at it in this quarrel with Gloster, and one would suppose it would have immediately been put in action. Instead of this a miracle scene is introduced, and the apprehension of Gloster for high treason comes immediately after. First enters one, crying, 'a miracle!'

Gloster. What means this noise?
Fellow, what miracle dost thou proclaim?
One. A miracle! a miracle!
Suffolk. Come to the king, and tell him what miracle.
One. Forsooth, a blind man at Saint Alban's shrine,
Within this half hour, hath receiv'd his sight;
A man that ne'er saw in his life before.
K. Henry. Now, God be prais'd! that to believing souls
Gives light in darkness, comfort in despair!

Then we have the Mayor of St. Alban's, and his brethren; and Simpcox, borne between two persons in a chair; his wife, and a great multitude, following.

Cardinal. Here come the townsmen in procession,
To present your highness with the man.

K. Henry. Great is his comfort in this earthly vale,
Although by his sight his sin be multiplied.

Gloster. Stand by, my masters, bring him near the king,
His highness' pleasure is to talk with him.

K. Henry. Good fellow, tell us here the circumstance,
That we for thee may glorify the Lord.
What, hast thou been born blind, and now restor'd?

Simpcox. Born blind, an't please your grace.

Wife. Ay, indeed, was he.

Suff. What woman is this?

Wife. His wife, an't like your lordship.

Glo. Had'st thou been his mother, thou could'st have better told.

K. Henry. Where wert thou born?

Simp. At Berwick in the north, an't like your grace.

K. Henry Poor soul! God's goodness hath been great to thee:
Let never day nor night unhallow'd pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done.

Q. Margaret. Tell me, good fellow, cam'st thou here by chance,
Or of devotion, to this holy shrine?

Simp. God knows, of pure devotion; being call'd
A hundred times, and oftener, in my sleep
By good Saint Alban; who said, 'Simpcox, come;
Come, offer, at my shrine, and I will help thee.'

Wife. Most true, forsooth; and many time and oft
Myself have heard a voice to call him so.

Car. What, art thou lame?

Simp. Ay, God Almighty help me!

Suff. How cam'st thou so?

Simp. A fall off of a tree.

Wife. A plum-tree, master.

Glo. How long hast thou been blind?

Simp. O, born so, master.

Glo. What, and would'st climb a tree?

Simp. But once in all my life, when I was a youth.

Wife. Too true, and bought his climbing very dear.

Glo. Mass, thou lov'dst plums well, that would'st venture so.

Simp. Alas, good sir, my wife desir'd some damsons,
And made me climb with danger of my life.

Glo. A subtle knave! but yet it shall not serve.
Let's see thine eyes: wink now: now open them.
In my opinion, yet thou seest not well.

Simp. Yes, master, clear as day; I thank God and St. Alban.

Glo. Say'st thou me so? what colour is this cloak of?

Simp. Red, master, red as blood.

Glo. Why, that's well said: what colour is my gown of?

Simp. Black, forsooth; coal-black as jet.

K. Henry. Why, then thou know'st what colour jet is of?

Suff. And yet, I think, jet did he never see.

Glo. But cloaks and gowns, before this day, a many.

Wife. Never before this day in all his life.

Glo. Tell me, sirrah, what's my name?

Simp. Alas, master, I know not.

Glo. What's his name?

Simp. I know not.

Glo. Nor his?

Simp. No indeed, master.

Glo. What's thine own name?

Simp. Saunder Simpcox, an if it please you, master.

Glo. Saunder, sit there, the lying'st knave in Christendom. If thou hadst been born blind, thou might'st as well know all our names, as thus to name the several colours we do wear. Sight may distinguish colours: but suddenly to nominate them all, it is impossible. My lords, St. Alban here hath done a miracle; would ye not think that cunning to be great, that could restore this cripple to his legs?

Simp. O master, that you could!

Glo. My masters of St. Alban's,
Have you not beadles in your town,
And things called whips?

Mayor. Yes, my lord, if it please your grace.

Glo. Then send for one presently.

May. Sirrah, go fetch the beadle hither straight.

Glo. Now fetch me a stool hither. Now, sirrah, if you mean to save yourself from whipping, leap me over this stool, and run away.

Simp. Alas! master, I am not able to stand alone; you go about to torture me in vain.

Glo. Well, sir, we must have you find your legs. Sirrah, beadle, whip him till he leap over that same stool.

Beadle. I will, my lord. Come on, sirrah. Off with your doublet quickly.

Simp. Alas! master, what shall I do? I am not able to stand.

After the beadle has hit him once, he leaps over the stool and runs away; and they follow, and cry, 'a miracle!'

K. Henry. O God, seest thou this, and bear'st so long!

Queen. It made me laugh to see the villain run.

Gloster. Follow the knave, and take this drab away.

Wife. Alas! sir, we did it for pure need.

Glo. Let them be whip'd through every market town,
Till they come to Berwick, from whence they came.

Cardinal. Duke Humphrey has done a miracle to-day.

Suffolk. True, made the lame to leap, and fly away.

Glo. But you have done more miracles than I;
You made, in a day, my lord, whole towns to fly.

Shakspere gives this instance of a pretended miracle in order, apparently, to expose the nature of those esteemed real, and to show that however the religious might believe in them as proofs of heaven, the wise and the cunning of the world, laymen, priests, and women, laughed at them. Excepting this object, it is difficult to conceive what the author could have in view. This miracle scene is purely episodical, and applies neither to anything going before nor coming after. We might suppose that a popish miracle was here ridiculed, were not the early incidents of the case a perfect transcript of the instance of Jesus restoring a blind man to sight.

Henry's acknowledgment of a God involves a reflection on Providence. The ideas in part, and, in part the words, seem taken from the Scriptures. We are told upon the occasion of miracles in the New Testament, that a great multitude went about glorifying the Lord. King Henry is drawn as receiving all with the most approved credulity. He seems overcome by the impious exhibition. Shakspere puts into his mouth wonder, at the forbearance of God. His other characters, under similar circumstances, fall into daring remonstrance at the want of help, or interference, in the heavens.

Knight calls this scene 'a ludicrous episode in a tragic

history.' This indicates what he thought of the nature of it with regard to the plot. Sir Thomas More related the same occurrence with due reverence, as told by Grafton in his Chronicles, inserted by Knight. There the whole affair bears a very different aspect, and conveys no reflection on religion. Thus it will be seen how Shakspere changed his materials to suit his own views.

The two combatants, the master and the apprentice, appear before the king to fight. This is another episode, apparently only introduced to ridicule trial by combat, which the faith of Christianity in Providence supposed would decide the right, and which remained on the statute book till 1819. It will be observed, in Shakspere's latter plays, that he does not introduce his supernaturalism as an episode; nor does he give such a constant succession of episodes, but in these historical plays they form the salient points.

1 *Neigh.* Here, neighbour Horner, I drink to you in a cup of sack; and fear not, neighbour, you shall do well enough.

2 *Neigh.* And here, neighbour, here's a cup of charneco.

3 *Neigh.* And here's a pot of good double beer, neighbour: drink, and fear not your man.

Horner. Let it come, i'faith, and I'll pledge you all: and a fig for Peter!

1 *Prentice.* Here, Peter, I drink to thee; and be not afraid.

2 *Pren.* Be merry, Peter, and fear not thy master; fight for credit of the prentices.

Peter. I thank you all; drink, and pray for me, I pray you; for, I think, I have taken my last draught in this world. Here, Robin, an if I die, I give thee my apron; and, Will, thou shalt have my hammer: and here, Tom, take all the money that I have.—O Lord, bless me, I pray God! for I am never able to deal with my master, he hath learnt so much fence already.

Salisbury. Come, leave your drinking, and fall to blows. Sirrah, what's thy name.

Peter. Peter, forsooth.

Sal. Peter! what more?

Peter. Thump.

Sal. Thump! then see thou thump thy master well.

Hor. Masters, I am come hither, as it were, upon my man's instigations, to prove him a knave, and myself an honest man: and touching the Duke of York, will take my death, I never meant him

any ill, nor the king, nor the Queen: and therefore, Peter, have at thee with a downright blow, as Bevis of Southampton fell upon Ascapart.

York. Despatch:—this knave's tongue begins to double.
Sound trumpets, alarum to the combatants.

[*They fight, and Peter strikes down his master.*]

Hor. Hold, Peter, hold! I confess, I confess treason.

York. Take away his weapon:——Fellow, thank God, and the good wine in thy master's way.

Peter. O God, have I overcome mine enemies in this presence? O Peter, thou hast prevailed in right!

K. Henry. Go, take hence that traitor from our sight:
For, by his death, we do perceive his guilt:
And God, in justice, hath reveal'd to us
The truth and innocence of this poor fellow,
Which he had thought to have murder'd wrongfully.
Come, fellow, follow us for thy reward.

Shakspere, in fiction, does not follow the moral of rewarding the good and punishing the wicked; and even in history he does not keep to the fact in favour of virtue.

Shakspere represents the false accuser pious; but who does not feel the ridicule of his expressions, particularly in his triumph, and the irony conveyed in the observations of the King, when coupled with the real facts of the case? According to Holinshed, the master 'was slain without guilt. As for the false servant, he lived not long unpunished; for being convict of felony in court of assize, he was judged to be hanged, and so was, at Tyburn.' Read the description in Holinshed; the bare narration of fact—then read and consider Shakspere's way of treating it, and turning all piety into ridicule, by putting it into the mouth of the wrong-doer; and then the felicitation of the King on the issue of the right, which Shakspere coolly penned when he knew it was just the reverse.

The Duchess of Gloster is condemned to do penance, and banished for life. Shakspere puts into her mouth the right epithet for his character of the Cardinal and of priests, such as he chose to frame them—'Impious Beaufort.'

On the departure of her husband, Eleanor says—

Art thou gone too? all comfort go with thee!
For none abides with me: my joy is death;

Death, at whose name I oft have been afraid,
Because I wish'd this world's eternity.

By having no other comfort, and expressing the fear of death from the apprehensions which a materialist may be supposed to have, there is at least a negative inference of a denial of a future state and the eternity of the life to come.

Queen Margaret, the Cardinal, and Suffolk, agree to the assassination of Gloster.

Suffolk. Say but the word, and I will be his priest.
Cardinal. But I would have him dead, my lord of Suffolk,
Ere you can take due orders for a priest.

Suffolk comes to tell the King Gloster is dead.

Q. Margaret. Marry, God forefend!
Cardinal. God's secret judgment. I did dream to-night,
The Duke was dumb, and could not speak a word.
Q. Mar. How fares my lord? help, lords, the King is dead.
Somerset. Rear up his body, wring him by the nose.

To these illustrations of religious character and contempt of the King by Shakspere, we will add two specimens of the other kinds mentioned.

The King, on hearing of the loss of his French possessions, says, 'God's will be done.' York, the nephew of Mortimer, plotting the insurrection of Cade, says—

I will stir up in England some black storm,
Shall blow ten thousand souls to heav'n or hell.

Vaux reports to Margaret that the Cardinal is at the point of death,

Blaspheming God, and cursing men on earth.

This seems to be the antithesis to 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and good will towards men.' The King approaches the Cardinal's bed.

How fares my lord? speak, Beaufort, to thy Sovereign.
Cardinal. If thou be'st death, I'll give thee England's treasure,
Enough to purchase such another island,
So thou wilt let me live, and feel no pain.
K. Henry. Ah, what a sign it is of evil life,
Where death's approach is seen so terrible!
Warwick. Beaufort, it is thy Sovereign speaks to thee.

Car. Bring me unto my trial when you will.
Died he not in his bed? where should he die?
Can I make men live whether they will or no?
Oh, torture me no more, I will confess.
Alive again? then show me where he is,
I'll give a thousand pound to look upon him.
He hath no eyes, the dust hath blinded them.
Comb down his hair; look! look! it stands upright,
Like lime-twigs set to catch my winged soul.
Give me some drink, and bid th' apothecary
Bring the strong poison that I bought of him.

K. Henry O thou eternal Mover of the heavens,
Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch;
Oh, beat away the busy, meddling fiend,
That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul,
And from his bosom purge this black despair!

War. See how the pangs of death do make him grin!

Sal. Disturb him not; let him pass peaceably.

K. Henry. Peace to his soul, if God's good pleasure be.
Lord Cardinal, if thou think'st on heav'n's bliss,
Hold up thy hand, make signal of thy hope.
He dies, and makes no sign!—O God, forgive him.

War. So bad a death argues a monstrous life.

K. Henry. Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all.
Close up his eyes, and draw the curtain close,
And let us all to meditation.

The scene confirms Vaux's report of the man. It is not the death of a hardened infidel, however bad, and however conscience-stricken by his crimes, that can be of any service to religion. It is a repentant and believing death-bed, fearful and hopeful, that claims the attention of mankind. The only mention of his soul by the dying man is attached to an idea more ludicrous than serious or real, arising out of his murder of Gloster. His determination to commit suicide are his own last words. The Cardinal dies a confirmed infidel as to the Christian hope of a future state. The scene is serious, but it is no more religious than the comic end of Falstaff.

It may be thought that the Cardinal was probably unable to make a 'sign,' as asked; but if this impression was intended, Shakspere would have mentioned the fact. As he does not, he leaves it to be inferred that the Cardinal was quite sensible when the King questioned him, and that he

had no sign to make. The King, who had every means of judging, as he stood by his bed-side, is of this opinion, and, accordingly, implores God to forgive him.

There was no necessity for this formal unbelief—there was sufficient to heighten dramatic effect, in the death of such a character, without having recourse to this expedient.

Knight says, Shakspere found a 'meagre outline' in Hall, which he has filled up in his own way to the scandal of religion, and for which he had no authority. The great point as mentioned by Hall was the Cardinal's love of money, which he thought could do everything. This Shakpere has preserved. The introduction of all the rest by the poet is a contradiction of historical fact. The real cardinal made a confession to his chaplain, of the little his riches and ambition had availed him; that his hope in them was now gone, as in everything in this world, and he only looked to another. 'But I see now the world faileth me, and so I am deceived: praying you all to pray for me.' Thus we again detect our author in the perversion of history, and the deviation militating against religion. The libel of a man's life even to his latter end.

The followers of Cade talk a language which was probably a caricature of the Puritans of Shakspere's time.

Bevis. Nay, more, the King's counsel are no good workmen.

Hol. True, and yet it is said, labour in thy vocation; which is as much as to say, let the magistrates be labouring men; and therefore should we be magistrates.

* * * * *

Hol. And Dick, the butcher:—

Bevis. Then is sin struck down like an ox, and iniquity's throat cut like a calf.

This is a parody on the prophets. Cade, taking up the scriptural style, says—

For our enemies shall fall before us, inspired with the spirit of putting down kings and princes.—Command silence.

* * * * *

All. God save your Majesty!

Cade. I thank you, good people. There shall be no money; all shall eat and drink upon my score; and I will apparel them all in one livery, that they may agree like brothers, and worship me their lord.

Such expressions afford a striking contrast to King Henry's observations upon the conduct of these men, who when told of their somewhat ridiculous, but not quite unjustifiable behaviour, says, in language borrowed from scripture—

O graceless men, they know not what they do.

God is his hope, and he thinks of sending some bishops against them to save their souls.

Cade says to Lord Say—

I am the besom that must sweep the court clean of such filth as thou art: thou hast men about thee that talk of a noun and verb, and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear.

Lord Say has a modern interpretation of religion peculiar to liberals, which does not strike Cade.

Ignorance is the curse of God,
Knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heav'n.

Cade says, in reply—

He has a familiar under his tongue; he speaks not of God's name.

On Cade's defeat, King Henry says—

Then heav'n set ope thy everlasting gates,
To entertain my vows of thanks and praise.

The language of the Puritans, in Shakspere's times, was probably not that of Henry's, when the Bible was not known in the vulgar tongue.

Iden, the killer of Cade, says—

Die, damned wretch, the curse of her that bare thee:
And as I thrust thy body in with my sword,
So wish I, I might thrust thy soul to hell.

Johnson condemns the 'horrid wish.' We may depend upon it Shakspere was not implicated in its wickedness—he was indifferent as to any real belief in its possibility. It is to be explained on the principle of his epitaph on Combe, noticed before.

When young Clifford appeals to arms, to decide the right to the crown, between the houses of York and Lancaster, Richard, the son of York, afterwards Richard III., says—

> Fie! charity for shame, speak not in spite,
> For you shall sup with Jesu Christ to-night.
>
> *Y. Clifford.* Foul stigmatic, that's more than thou canst tell.
>
> *R. Plantagenet.* If not in heav'n, you'll surely sup in hell.

This is the first appearance of Richard; and the words put in his mouth are very characteristic of him, from first to last. In irony he speaks of Christian virtues, and blasphemously uses the conversation between Jesus and the thief on the cross, to express his determination to kill his enemy if he can. Though he sometimes acted the hypocrite, his language is that of satirical disbelief. He seems born out of, and a climax to, the characters and speeches in the three parts of Henry VI. But this could never have been historical, it was purely Shaksperian. Young Clifford is made to appeal to religion, to gratify his vengeance.

> O war! thou son of hell,
> Whom angry Heavens do make their minister,
> Throw in the frozen bosoms of our part
> Hot coals of vengeance.
>
> * * * * *
>
> O let the vile world end.
>
> [*Seeing his dead father.*
>
> And the premised flames of the last day
> Knit earth and heav'n together:
> Now let the general trumpet blow his blast,
> Particularities and petty sounds
> To cease!

Was not this as horrid a prayer as the utterance of any hope that shocked Johnson? What he condemned merely affected individuals who merited punishment—this the whole world, here and hereafter. Men can look forward to a last judgment, as a day of vengeance on their enemies, however they may risk the infliction of it upon themselves. Shakspere often gives this feeling of a future state. Aaron even could wish it. Richard says, on slaying Somerset—

> Sword, hold thy temper; heart, be wrathful still:
> Priests pray for enemies, but princes kill.

We have an artful instance of the manner in which Shakspere wards off the suspicion of his levity. He makes Clifford say—

> But that my heart's on future mischief set,
> I would speak blasphemy, ere bid you fly;

as though that was the last thing one of Shakspere's characters would think of.

KING HENRY VI.—PART III.

THE piety of Henry becomes the scoff and abuse of all parties. Oaths, vows, and appeals to heaven, are again made to second and sanction atrocities, which either have not their warrant in history, are considerably exaggerated, or are selected from other incidents, by Shakspere. Such facts, coupled with such language, can furnish but one inference to a candid inquirer. Greene seems to make such inference from them, when he addressed to Shakspere a parody of one of his own lines in this play, 'a tiger's heart in a player's hide,' instead of 'a tiger's heart in a woman's hide,' which are the words of York to Queen Margaret. We should question, from these plays, the heart of the author: and it is even a relief to take refuge in the theory that they proceed from the head.

This part has few new features: it is very much a repetition of what has occurred in the preceding parts. We see the characters represented by Shakspere have more of religion in their mouths, and look more to heaven as they lose sight of charity upon earth. In this, as in the two preceding parts, there is less mention of nature, fortune, necessity, and fate, than in other plays; which is evidence that Shakspere had not yet so firmly taken up his philosophical ideas.

York takes an oath to let Henry reign during his life.

> *York.* I took an oath that he should quietly reign.
> *Edward.* But for a kingdom any oath may be broken:
> I'd break a thousand oaths to reign one year.
> *Richard.* No; God forbid your grace should be forsworn.

The authority for Edward's opinion is said to be taken from Cicero on moral duties. Shakspere, we have shown elsewhere, discredited oaths. Richard speaks by way of irony,



unless it be supposed that he was intended to appear religious under such transparent hypocrisy; and he delivers himself, apparently by way of jest, of a piece of casuistry, to show that his father is not forsworn, if he does break the oath he has taken.

Young Rutland is about to be slain by Clifford, and exclaims—

> O let me pray before I take my death.
> To thee I pray——Sweet Clifford pity me.

This request was not to be expected from one so young as Rutland, and we must look to our author for the reason of this sudden diversion of a natural application to heaven. The boy dies with a Latin speech from Ovid in his mouth, to the effect that the gods did it.

There are two accounts of the end of York—one that he was found dead in the field; the other, that he was treated as Holingshed said—like Jesus Christ before his crucifixion. Shakspere, of course, takes the incidents of Holingshed, as to their mocking him and putting a crown on his head. The handkerchief dipped in the blood of his son, given by Margaret to York to wipe his face, is the invention of Shakspere, and probably occurred to Shakspere from the popish legend of St. Veronicas. Before putting him to death, Margaret stays Clifford, saying—

> Nay, stay let's hear the orisons he makes;

which prayers are of course made up of curses and execrations on his enemies. All this impiety, in word and deed, of both parties, and the recollection of his own wickedness, is mixed up with an assurance of York that he is going to heaven. Richard exclaims, after hearing the recital of impending calamities—

> Wrap our bodies in black mourning gowns,
> Numb'ring our Ave-Maries with our beads.
> Or shall we on the helmets of our foes
> Tell our devotion with revengeful arms?
> If for the last, say ay; and to it, lords.

King Henry prays God not to revenge the infringement of his vow, which he did not break; and Clifford talks against charity and in favour of revenge, as natural and proper to man.

In the parley between the opposing forces before the battle of Towton, Richard swears to do execution on Clifford, 'by *him* that made us all.' Richard comes up to the retiring Warwick, and says—

> Thy brother's blood the thirsty earth hath drunk;

which Malone says is taken from Genesis xii., v. 11. When Shakspere has the sacred writings in his thoughts, why does he seem to take delight in furnishing his worst characters with their language? Edward and Warwick, in the midst of the fight, go on their knees, and make impious and religious appeals to God.

> *Warwick.* Here on my knee I vow to God above,
> I'll never pause again, never stand still,
> Till either death hath closed these eyes of mine,
> Or fortune given me measure of revenge.

Edward, who said he did not care for oaths if they came in the way of his ambition, but who is represented as religious, thus vows and prays to God:—

> O Warwick, I do bend my knee with thine,
> And in this vow do chain my soul with thine;
> And ere my knee rise from the earth's cold face,
> I throw my hands, mine eyes, my heart to thee,
> Thou setter up, and plucker down of kings!
> Beseeching thee, if with thy will it stands
> That to my foes this body must be prey,
> Yet that thy brazen gates of heaven may ope,
> And give sweet passage to my sinful soul.
> Now, lords, take leave until we meet again,
> Where'er it be, in heaven or on earth.

Apart from the battle, King Henry says—

> Here on this mole-hill will I sit me down;
> To whom God will, there be the victory!
> For Margaret my queen, and Clifford too,
> Have chid me from the battle; swearing both,
> They prosper best of all when I am thence.
> Would I were dead, if God's good will were so;
> For what is in this world but grief and woe?

A contemptible feeling, when he might have met death in the battle field, where his subjects were perishing on his behalf.

A son who has killed his father, says—

> Pardon me, God, I knew not what I did.



A father who has killed his son, says—

O pity, God, this miserable age!

K. Henry. Woe above woe; grief, more than common grief,
O that my death would stay these rueful deeds!
O pity, pity, gentle heaven, pity!

Richard, having wounded Clifford, finds him dead: the brothers abuse him.

Warwick. They mock thee, Clifford, swear as thou wast wont.
Richard. What, not an oath! nay, then the world goes hard,
When Clifford cannot spare his friends an oath:
I know by that he's dead.

These appeals are made to heaven, as the mere panderer to the savage passions of men.

The kind exclamations of Henry are but good nature out of place, as a little discretion and resolution on his part, as both friends and foes acknowledged, might have prevented the 'deeds' he regrets.

King Henry is next introduced, in disguise, with a prayer-book in his hand. King Edward's conversation with the Lady Grey is made the subject of the same irreligious ribaldry which was used in Charles's conversation with Joan of Arc. When they jest and express indignation at the King's marriage with her, Edward asks if Richard is offended?

Gloster. Not I; no. God forbid that I should wish
Them severed whom God hath join'd together;
Pity to sunder them that yoke so well.
K. Edward. Setting your scorns and your mislike aside.

King Edward is made to know the nature of these remarks, as well as others, who express their sense of them: however, the commentators chose to profess ignorance of the ridicule of holy things, conveyed by the use of sacred language.

When King Edward is made prisoner, he talks of 'fortune's malice,' 'the compass of her wheel,' and of 'what fates impose.' King Henry ascribes his deliverance to God. Warwick tells him to avoid

Fortune's malice,
For few men rightly temper with the skies.

This is the first general occurrence of these terms in Shakspere's English historical plays, so very inappropriate, but common to him afterwards in all plays. Henry abdicates, to spend his days in devotion. 'Fortune maketh us amends,' Edward says, on returning to England: he retakes the king. His brother Clarence leaves Warwick, and says—

> Perhaps thou wilt object my holy oath;
> To keep that oath were more impiety,
> Than Jepthah's, when he sacrificed his daughter.

Warwick dies, and bids them all farewell to meet again in heaven; and Queen Margaret, on parting with the lords, going to execution, says—

> So part we sadly in this troublous world, to meet with joy in sweet Jerusalem.

Such ruffians made to expect eternal bliss!

King Henry, towards the close of his life, is made to take upon himself the office of prophet. He foresees in young Richmond a Henry VII. As he is about to foretel the future of Richard, he is cut short by his stabbing him.

> *Gloster.* I'll hear no more: die, prophet in thy speech;
> For this, amongst the rest, was I ordain'd.
>
> *K. Henry.* Ay, and for much more slaughter after this.
> O God! forgive my sins, and pardon thee.
>
> *Glo.* What! will th' aspiring blood of Lancaster
> Sink in the ground? I thought it would have mounted.

In relation to him, he must have meant to 'heaven,' and he goes on to say—

> If any spark of life be yet remaining,
> Down, down to hell, and say I sent thee thither.

He ridicules the prognostics from the appearance of his person when born.

> Then, since the heaven's have shap'd my body so,
> Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it.
>
> * * * * *
>
> And this word love, which grey-beards call divine,
> Be resident in men like one another.

He then relates and ridicules the other prophecies of himself,

but says he will use them to work destruction amongst his own family. Kissing King Edward's child, he says, aside—

> To say the truth, so Judas kiss'd his master;
> And cried, all hail! when as he meant all harm.

The open display of infidelity, though it be a question whether suitable to a character or not, is unfavourable to religion, particularly when it fails to excite abhorrence. No wonder from these specimens that the hunchbacked tyrant was at one time considered a comic character.

We think the introduction of such a religious character as Henry VI. in a play is, or is intended to be, unfavourable to religion. Bacon, from an anecdote he gives, thought the reality was no feather in the cap of religion. Henry VII. wanted Pope Julius to canonise Henry VI. Bacon supposes the Pope refused, lest 'as Henry was reputed in the world abroad but for a simple man, the estimation of that kind of honour might be diminished, if there were not a distance kept between *innocents* and saints.'

Johnson says, in reference to the prophecy of Henry VII., grandfather to Queen Elizabeth, that 'Shakspere *knew his trade*'—meaning that in political (and doubtless also in religious) speculation he would keep to the safe side, and keep up appearances, as author's do now, where their interests are concerned; yet notwithstanding this policy, ascribed to Shakspere, how palpable is the supremacy of his inclination to throw disrespect on religion!

COMEDY OF ERRORS.

THIS play is made by Shakspere to be more Christian than Pagan, in order to be at ease in comedy, and witty at the expense of Christianity, which was better for that purpose than Paganism. Knight says the description of Ephesus, by Antipholus of Syracuse, who declares himself a Christian, is taken by Shakspere from St. Paul. The point of it in the poet seems to be, that all who flock to Ephesus for spiritual purposes, do it for the sake of cheating people out of their money. What is there of irreligion in Plautus, from whom Shakspere took the play?

In defence of the rather forced construction of Shakspere, in making his *dramatis personæ* Christians, Knight seems to argue, that the poet had a right to imagine them early Christian converts. This would make a Lucian of Shakspere. There are few heathenisms introduced in conversation—the usual habit of the poet in Christian personages—and serious dramas and passages of a later period. However, in the grave beginning of the play, when the Duke of Ephesus would hear to the end the story of the shipwrecked Ægeon condemned to death, Shakspere commits himself to his general impiety.

> *Duke.* Nay, forward, old man, do not break off so;
> For we may pity, though not pardon thee.
>
> *Ægeon.* O, had the gods done so, I had not now
> Worthily term'd them merciless to us.

A plain arraignment of Providence; another comparison in favour of men over Gods; the same sentiment as expressed before by Pericles.

As Shakspere made all the characters Christians, it is not by excepting Ægeon, or using the term 'gods,' that Shak-



spere can save himself from the meaning of his words. We only see that he was conscious of what might be said against him for it, and he left himself a way of escape by a quibble.

When Dromio E. has been beaten by the wrong Antipholus, Adriana orders him back again. Dromio E. answers—

> Go back again, and be new beaten home?
> For God's sake send some other messenger.
> *Adriana.* Back, slave, or I will break thy pate across.
> *Dromio E.* And he will bless that cross with other beating.
> Between you I shall have a *holy* head.

This is all levity with sacred subjects. A jest on the cross. Dromio E. is afraid that his head, between them both, will be broken into the form of that symbol.

Antipholus of Syracuse says, of Adriana—

> How can she thus then call us by our names,
> Unless it be by inspiration?
> *Dromio S.* O, for my beads! I cross me for a sinner.

Shakspere gives to the language of love the language of religion: this is not uncommon in the lover and the poet. Shakspere seems to make the Christian Antipholus revel in the licence, and show how he had inwardly digested this new faith. He says—

> Less in your knowledge and your grace you show not
> Than our earth's wonder, more than earth, divine.
> Teach me, dear creature, how to think and speak;
> Lay open to my earthy gross conceit,
> Smother'd in errors, feeble, shallow, weak,
> The folded meaning of your words' deceit:
> Against my soul's pure truth why labour you
> To make it wander in an unknown field?
> Are you a God? would you create me new?
> Transform me then, and to your power I'll yield.
> But if that I am I.

Did Shakspere give this limit to creation—the making of one animal into another? He concludes:

> My sole earth's heaven, and my heaven's claim.

This startles Johnson. The Doctor says, 'when he calls the girl his only heaven on earth, he utters the common cant of lovers. When he calls her his heaven's claim, I cannot

understand him. Perhaps he means all that he asks of heaven.' After apostrophising her, as pious people speak of religion, he as much as says he gives up every claim to any other heaven than her. This preference of love to heaven is usual with Shakspere, and it is marked by the antithesis. The fat scullion wench of Antipholus of E. having pursued the other Dromio of S., he more broadly than the master delivers himself of a sarcasm on the last day.

Dromio S. Marry, sir, she's the kitchen-wench, and all grease: and I know not what use to put her to, but to make a lamp of her, and run from her by her own light. I warrant, her rags, and the tallow in them, will burn a Poland winter: if she lives till doomsday, she'll burn a week longer than the whole world.

He says of his master, seized by a bailiff—

He's in Tartar Limbo, worse than hell;
A devil in an everlasting garment hath him;
One that, before the judgment, carries poor souls to hell.

On the entrance of a courtesan.—

Antipholus S. Satan, avoid! I charge thee tempt me not.

Dromio S. Master, is this Mistress Satan?

Ant. S. It is the devil.

Dro. S. Nay, she is worse, she's the devil's dam; and here she comes in the habit of a light wench; and thereof comes, that the wenches say, 'God damn me;' that's as much as to say, 'God make me a light wench.' It is written, they appear to men like angels of light; light is an effect of fire, and fire will burn; ergo, light wenches will burn; come not near her.

Courtesan. Your man and you are marvellous merry, sir. Will you go with me, we'll mend our dinner here?

Dro. S. Master, if you do expect spoon-meat, bespeak a long spoon.

Ant. S. Why, Dromio?

Dro. S. Marry, he must have a long spoon that must eat with the devil.

Ant. S. Avoid then, fiend! what tell'st thou me of supping?
Thou art, as you are all, a sorceress:
I conjure thee to leave me, and begone.

Here is a famous quotation from scripture, introduced to make low jokes on the worst objects. Do such associations bespeak a reverential mind? Pinch, a conjurer, is brought in to cure the supposed madness of Antipholus E.



Pinch. I charge thee, Satan, hous'd within this man,
To yield possession to my holy prayers;
And to thy state of darkness hie thee straight,
I conjure thee by all the saints in heaven.

Shakspere here ridicules the possession by devils. He does it elaborately in the Twelfth Night.

At that time the belief must have been held in Ephesus. In the catalogue of 'libertines of sin,' which Antipholus of S. is said to have taken from St. Paul, the only one we are made acquainted with, is a Christian conjurer.

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

THIS play is said by the critics to be a juvenile performance, and Knight says it bears evidence of the early studies and reading of Shakspere; we shall see to what purpose. In the first utterance of the play, he introduces the language of religion relative to a future state, and gives it quite a contrary application.

> Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
> Live register'd upon our brazen tombs:
> And then grace us in the disgrace of death:
> When, spite of cormorant devouring Time,
> Th' endeavour of this present breath may buy
> That honour which shall bate his scythe's keen edge,
> And make us heirs of all eternity.
> Therefore, brave conquerors! for so you are,
> That war against your own affections,
> And the huge army of the world's desires—
> Our late edict shall strongly stand in force.

'Fame,' not salvation, is to make us heirs of eternity. 'Gracing the disgrace of death,' the 'victory over time,' 'bating the scythe's keen edge,' making us 'heirs of all eternity,' 'conquerors,' 'warriors against affections,' and the 'huge army of the world's desires;' all this seems borrowed from the epistles of St. Paul, or taken from the burial service, and pointed with a very different moral. The heathenist and materialist poet, Horace, when delivering his book to the world, said—'I have constructed a monument more durable than brass; I shall not altogether die.'

The king reminds Biron that he has sworn, as well as the rest, to study, fast, and not see women.

> *Biron.* By yea and nay, sir, then I swore in jest.

In the Winter's Tale, Shakspere has expended some banter on 'verily,' and he seems here to do the same by '*yea* and *nay*,' which Jesus recommended. It is probable that Shakspere meant to laugh at the Puritans who had begun, what they carried to greater excess than any other sect—the use of scriptural language, in which they doubtlessly included yeas, nays, and verilies. They professed, according to the injunction, to 'swear not at all;' but Shakspere would insinuate that they did, at least in 'verily,' and that yea and nay meant as much. The following, probably, is not only a philosophical opinion, but a satire also on the Puritans who pleaded predestination, unless overruled by special grace. Biron reminds the king, that the French princess is coming to see him :—

> *King.* We must, of force, dispense with this decree,
> She must lie here on mere necessity.
>
> *Biron.* Necessity will make us all forsworn
> Three thousand times within this three years' space:
> For every man with his effects is born:
> Not by might master'd, but by special grace.
> If I break faith, this word shall speak for me:
> I am forsworn on mere necessity.

'Biron, amidst his extravagancies,' says Johnson, 'speaks with great justness against the folly of vows. They are made without sufficient regard to the variations of life, and are, therefore, broken by some unforeseen necessity. They proceed commonly from a presumptuous confidence, and a false estimate of human power.' Nothing can be stronger in the belief of necessity than this speech of Biron—there is no might in man, we are born with our causes and effects. As to grace, it is the jest of Biron, and of all Shakspere's characters. The moral of the play turns on the inutility of oaths and verbal promises, which in passages of other dramas so often meet with the disapprobation of Shakspere. Necessity was a question which, says Boswell, Johnson was afraid to encounter; yet here he seems to yield to the doctrine, and, as a moralist, to pass over rather lightly the distinctions between truth and falsehood—between the moral resolves and infirmity of purpose, necessitated by the power of things over words. The Doctor probably means, by the extravagancies of Biron, the derision of everything serious.

King. A letter from the magnificent Armado.

Biron. How low soever the matter, I hope in God for high words.

Long. A high hope for a low having: God grant us patience!

The letter is to acquaint the king that a couple have been found infringing the statutes. Costard has been seen with Jaquenetta.

Costard. Such is the simplicity of man, to hearken after the flesh.

King. Sir, I will pronounce sentence; you shall fast a week with bran and water.

Cost. I had rather pray a month with mutton and porridge.

* * * *

I suffer for the truth, sir: for true it is, I was taken with Jaquenetta, and Jaquenetta is a true girl; and therefore welcome the sour cup of prosperity: affliction may one day smile again, and until then, sit thee down, sorrow.

As the judgment of the king was Roman Catholic, so the preference of Costard to the other form was probably to ridicule the Puritans. The language, also, was probably used by that sect, but it is taken from the Scriptures, and what they used seriously, is here put jocosely.

Armado asks, what great men have been in love?

Moth. Samson, master; he was a man of good carriage, great carriage; for he carried the town-gates on his back like a porter; and he was in love.

Costard, on his way to prison, says—

Well, if ever I do see the merry days of desolation that I have seen, some shall see——

Moth. What shall some see?

Cost. Nay, nothing, Master Moth, but what they look upon. It is not for prisoners to be silent in their words, and therefore I will say nothing: I thank God I have as little patience as another man, and therefore I can be quiet.

Costard's speech is a párody of the words of the prophet applied by Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem. But the answer to the inquiry of Moth seems a sarcastic denial of the end of the world, of the fulfilment of prophecy, of the great events that have been seen, and the religious look forward to see in all ages.

Armado, failing, communes with himself in a puritanical love jargon.

Love is a familiar, love is a devil; there is no evil angel but love; yet Samson was so tempted, and he had an excellent strength; yet was Solomon so seduced, and he had a very good wit.

* * * * * *

But O! but O——

Moth. The hobby-horse is forgot.

This was the burden of an old song, a satire on the Puritans for putting down the use of the hobby horse; a man dressed as a horse at the May games. This shows that Shakspere was thinking of the Puritans; he has also put it into the mouth of Hamlet. Such a suppression was a beginning which ended in putting down theatres.

Sir Nathaniel is brought in to ridicule parsons and their conversation. There is not much humour in what this example of the priesthood says; but it is not intended to hold him, or his words, up to respect. As has been observed by a critic, he is toad-eater to Holofernes, and piously says: 'Sir, I praise the Lord for you, and so may my parishioners.' He says to Holofernes, of the matter in conversation, which seems to be a deer hunt—

Very reverend sport, truly; and done in the testimony of a good conscience.

When Holofernes sends the love-letter of Biron to the king—

Nathaniel. Sir, you have done this in the fear of God, very religiously: and as a certain father saith——

Holofernes. Sir, tell not me of the father, I do fear colourable colours.

Holofernes invites him to say grace at dinner, that is to dine with him, because he praised his verses. After dinner, he passes an encomium on the pedant's conversation at table—'strange,' he says, 'without heresy.'

The king and his courtiers have all fallen in love, and come in successively to confess it. The language of love is given a superiority over religion: it is rather beyond what Johnson palliates as the common cant of lovers. Longaville excuses the breaking of his vow, because he forswore

a woman, not a goddess, that his vow was earthly, she a heavenly love, and thus concludes:—

> What fool is not so wise
> To lose an oath to win a paradise?

Biron, who overhears them, is not very scrupulous in his comparisons and remarks; and when he comes forward, says—

> You found his mote, the king your mote did see;
> But I a beam do find in each of three.

Thus he is made to apply the Scriptures, when he is equally guilty of having made love. He continues in the same strain of irreverence, ironically declaring it a sin to break a vow.

> I, that am honest; I, that hold it sin
> To break the vow I am engaged in.

When Costard brings the love-letter of Biron, Biron says—

> Ah, you whoreson loggerhead, you were born to do me shame.

And addressing them all—

> The sea will ebb and flow, heaven will show his face:
> Young blood doth not obey an old decree.
> We cannot cross the cause why we were born:
> Therefore of all hands must we be forsworn.

All this seems very necessitarian in doctrine.

They apply to Biron for 'some proof;' their 'faith is not torn;' some 'flattery for this evil;' some 'trick to cheat the devil.'

At the conclusion of a very long speech, he says—

> Let us once lose our oaths, to find ourselves;
> Or else we lose ourselves, to keep our oaths.
> It is religion to be thus forsworn,
> For charity itself fulfils the law;
> And who can sever love from charity?
> *King.* Saint Cupid, then! and soldiers, to the field!

which is a parody on words from St. Paul.

Costard says of Moth, the clever page, to Armado—

> O that the heavens were so pleased, that thou wert but my bastard! what a joyful father wouldst thou make me?

The princess uses the exclamation, 'St. Denis to St. Cupid.' Johnson says, 'the Princess of France invokes, with too much levity, the patron of her country to oppose his power to that of Cupid.' If this were levity, what were the expressions of the rest? Boyet relates to her how Moth is instructed by the king to make a speech to her:—

> For, quoth the king, an angel shalt thou see;
> Yet fear not thou, but speak audaciously.
> The boy replied, an angel is not evil;
> I should have fear'd her, had she been a devil.
> With that all laugh'd, and clapp'd him on the shoulder,
> Making the bold wag by their praises bolder.

The Princess asks, on hearing Armado—

> Doth this man serve God?
> *Biron.* Why ask you?
> *Prin.* He speaks not like a man of God's making.

This sentiment occurs in several other plays.

Holofernes acts the part of Judas, meant for Maccabæus, but the fun of the courtiers is to suppose him Judas Iscariot.

Holofernes. Judas I am.
Dum. A Judas!
Hol. Not Iscariot, sir;
Judas I am, 'yclept Machabæus.
Dum. Judas Machabæus clipt, is plain Judas.
Biron. A kissing traitor. How art thou prov'd Judas?
Hol. Judas I am.
Dum. The more shame for you, Judas.
Hol. What mean you, sir?
Boyet. To make Judas hang himself.
Hol. Begin, sir, you are my elder.
Biron. Well follow'd; Judas was hang'd on an elder.
Boyet. Therefore, as he is an ass, let him go.
And so adieu, sweet Jude; nay, why dost thou stay?
Dum. For the latter end of his name.
Biron. For the Ass to the Jude; give it him. Jud-as, away.
Hol. This is not generous, not gentle, not humble.
Boyet. A light for Monsieur Judas: it grows dark, he may stumble.
Prin. Alas! poor Machabæus, how he hath been baited.

What Holofernes says of their treatment to him, Knight

says is true enough. Knight can see disrespect to men, but not to God. Rosaline, charging Biron with his perjury, condemns him for his conversation, which shows well enough, as in other places, what the author thought of his own wit, at the expense of religion.

> *Rosaline.* Oft have I heard of you, my Lord Biron,
> Before I saw you; and the world's large tongue
> Proclaims you for a man replete with mocks;
> Full of comparisons and wounding flouts;
> Which you on all estates will execute,
> That lie within the mercy of your wit.

Rosaline tells him to pass a twelvemonth making jokes to thep atients of an hospital. This again shows that nothing was thought capable of acting seriously on his levity. Biron says it is impossible, which she thinks, to excite mirth in the dying. Shakspere could venture on such a trial of his wit, and represent what they thought could not be, when he made the scene of Falstaff's death a source of profane humour to the knight himself, and those who surrounded him. Rosaline adds—

> Why, that's the way to choke a gibing spirit,
> Whose influence is begot of that loose grace,
> Which shallow-laughing hearers give to fools:
> A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
> Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
> Of him that makes it.

Falstaff also says, the excellence of his wit depends upon the goodness of the listener. Therefore the religious reader and hearers are not the most likely to understand Shakspere's wit in these respects: those who appreciate him best, are those who sympathise with his humour, have a 'loose grace,' or want of reverence. Hazlitt says of this play, that it is too full of 'controversial divinity.'



HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK.

EXTERNAL and internal evidence are so strong, that Hamlet was originally an early work of Shakspere; that without pretending to fix its precise date, we have given it a place at the conclusion of those generally considered to be his first performances. But in stating it to have been one of his earliest plays, it is allowed also to partake of the nature of a later work, from the many alterations and additions in its second issue, which may be one way of accounting for the differences, as well as variety, in its sentiments. Most writers on Shakspere, have directly or indirectly drawn conclusions as to Shakspere, personally, from Hamlet. Knight says, 'Hamlet betrays the workings of the author's mind.'

Hallam says, there is one type of character very frequently produced in Shakspere's plays—that of a censurer of mankind. He not only thinks the sentiments of the character were those of Shakspere, but from them he proceeds to assign the feelings under which Shakspere wrote them, and give the moral life of their author. Hallam remarks:—'There seems to have been a period of Shakspere's life when his heart was ill at ease, and ill content with the world or his own conscience; the memory of hours misspent, the pang of affection misplaced or unrequited, the experience of man's worser nature, which intercourse with ill chosen associates, by choice or circumstance, peculiarly teaches. These, as they sank down into the depths of his great mind, seem not only to have inspired it with the conception of Lear and Timon, but that of one primary character—the censurer of mankind.'

Hallam would give to Shakspere the idiosyncracy of a Byron. There is some similarity in the experience and feelings of Byron to those of Shakspere, as they are inferred by

Hallam; the same causes produced the same effects—the censure of mankind—and, therefore, we may expect some coincidence in their sentiments on philosophy and religion.

It is evident that the author of the history of literature must be a person peculiarly well fitted for the task of interpreting a man's character from his works, and, therefore, his views have great weight. Now we would ask the impartial reader, whether such a character as Hallam describes does not generally produce the infidel, rather than the religious man? Is not the result the introduction of one primary character—the censurer of mankind—the type generally of unbelievers who criticise the world, and from its anomalies censure religion?

'The type, that of censurer of mankind,' Mr. Hallam proceeds to say, (we quote from Mr. Knight) 'is first seen in Jaques, then in the exiled Duke of the same play, and in the Duke of Measure for Measure; but in these, in the shape of merely contemplative philosophy.' * * 'In Hamlet, this is mingled with the impulses of a perturbed heart, under the pressure of extraordinary circumstances.' The difference seems to be, that the philosophy of Hamlet combines more eccentricity, more extravagance, and, it may be said, acerbity of disposition, than in other characters.

Censure implies satire, but we do not think any author has pointed out how completely Hamlet, more than any other play of Shakspere, is throughout a work of satire. If a satire on things in general, the inference seems strong that it enters into his philosophical and religious speculations. His style of philosophy not all contemplative, his style of censure not all denunciatory, suitably to his character, is mixed up with humour and irony. He does not on the whole express himself as any of the other characters mentioned by Hallam; yet, with less cause than many of them, he is more universal in his bitterness and invectives. Jaques and his Duke are certainly well pleased with nature, however averse to society. The Duke, in Measure for Measure, is content with the world as he pictures it. Timon, though turned into a hater of humanity, is on very good terms with the rest of nature. Lear does not so much break out against the universe. But it is Hamlet's disposition before he is

acquainted with his wrongs, and he inveighs against nature, and thence up to nature's God. He seems to consider himself injured in being made—wronged in being a man; and not only angry with his own existence, but angry with the existence of others—angry that there should be any religious or natural obligation to preserve life, or fear death; reasoning himself into an indifference of life and the prospects of spiritual annihilation, yet indignant at the material revolutions of the grave. Religion is not forgotten in his deprecations or irony; there seems a perverse ingenuity exercised in drawing false conclusions from it. We think Hallam confines these sentiments of Shakspere within too narrow limits. They are entertained by Shakspere from the first to the last of his plays—from Titus Andronicus down to the Tempest; and there are always traces of them to be found, if they do not constitute entire characters. Irreligious philosophy is the staple of those primary characters which appear as the censurers of mankind. Indeed, it may be questioned whether any character drawn by this dramatist was intended to have a religious tendency, whether philosopher, clown, priest, or historical personage.

Shakspere is more personally objective in Hamlet than in any other play; there is, therefore, the more reason for believing him individually represented in its sentiments.

We do not expect grossness in so serious a drama as Hamlet; and in the tragedies of Shakspere it is of a different kind, or less frequent than in the comedies. Yet there are as many instances of it in Hamlet as in any other play; and those more coarse and less excusable than on other occasions. To those who fancy the humour, the remark of Ophelia may be applied, it is 'still better and still worse.' The sex are slandered by the interpretation and use of it given to Ophelia. Shakspere has stamped the mixed character of Hamlet by it. The infidelity, therefore, of the hero and the author must be inferred by those critics who have asserted that it always accompanies obscenity.

Accorded by the general voice to be more than ordinarily philosophical in its speculations, no play has given rise to greater discussion than Hamlet, as to all its meanings. What the author thought, or intended to be thought, from

his sentiments, characters, and incidents, are all equally involved in controversy. Our general theory of Shakspere's play, affords a solution of this mysteriousness.

On account of the irregularity of the plot of Hamlet, many have found fault with it. But in the appearance of the ghost so many times, and to so little purpose, the irresolution and diversion of Hamlet from all his designs, and the chance medley which ensues, (in killing every one before the right one) there is evidently a higher intention than the surface one—viz., discussing, sceptically, the ideas of Providence and of chance. The term 'chance' is used popularly to signify, an effect the cause of which cannot be explained, or which the generality of mankind never pause to consider. Chance, philosophically regarded, must resolve itself into fate, necessity, or predestination. In such usage, 'Providence' is sometimes employed for 'necessity.' In this way it may be said, 'Divinity [necessity] shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will.' The right understanding of this remarkable play greatly depends on observing that 'chance,' 'fate,' 'necessity,' 'fortune,' 'providence,' 'divinity,' are chiefly employed as reciprocal terms.

According to Johnson, there is an entire want of moral in Hamlet. But may we not discover the moral, if moral it may be called, of Shakspere, in the very absence of the moral of Johnson? Mr. Knight seems to have been forced into this precise view, when he thus answers the objections which Johnson and others had to the mode of producing the catastrophe. 'A tragedy, terminated by *chance*, appears to be a capital thing for the rule and line men to lay hold of. But they forget the poet's purpose. Had Hamlet been otherwise, his will would have been the predominant agent in the catastrophe. The empire of chance* would have been overruled; the guilty would have been punished; the innocent, perhaps, would have been spared.' As Hamlet is the most philosophical, so it may be called the most religious of Shakspere's plays: there are in it passages, frequently quoted, in favour of religion; when we come to the instances, we shall show

* 'The empire of chance' means the empire of necessity—the doctrine which Shakspere covertly advocates throughout this play.

with what propriety. Our theory accounts for the introduction of religion, battling with the idea of chance, whose dominion the play goes to establish. It was necessary that there should be sentiments of religion in this play, as Shakspere, in portraying such a character as Hamlet, intended to draw the character, not of a confirmed infidel, but of a sceptic. Hamlet was a young man—too young to reign: he had just left college, to which he wished to return, and they went there young in those days.* There established opinions had doubtless been taught him; and those put in his mouth by Shakspere, are perpetually combated by doubts which naturally arise to persons of genius, and of reflection—as was the case with Shelley under similar college circumstances. Early sentiments of this kind once questioned, would produce terrible convulsions in most men's minds, and overwhelm them with horror, and unless successfully combated they would end in total scepticism. Now Hamlet, of a reflective nature and powerful genius, was just of the age to be bewildered by speculative philosophy, and torn to pieces by doubts.

Readers of biographies must be aware, that most thoughtful men, at one period of their lives, have been assailed with doubts of all received opinions. Such have been the first efforts of judgment and reason, independent of, and in opposition to, education. Such conflicts end in the paramount authority of faith in things unseen, or total and settled disbelief, and sometimes in insanity. Most people who have felt the whole extent of this transition state, these violent collisions and eventful revolutions, must confess it was a time of great melancholy, great misery—that it was comparative Elysium to arrive at belief, or disbelief, from such a hell of discord. It appears that Shakspere, apart from the necessary machinery and action of the play, and the individualising of Hamlet, wished to depict such a general state of mind under ordinary circumstances. Besides, therefore, what it might be deemed indispensable to delineate of individual peculiarity, in consequence of Hamlet having seen

* Though this play refers to Denmark in ancient times, the manners depicted are those of Shakspere's age.

his father's apparition, which might naturally disorder his senses, it seems reasonable to believe that our poet sought to exhibit a little of that tendency to insanity, which a person may labour under, at Hamlet's time of life, in consequence of not knowing what decision to arrive at on the most interesting and momentous subjects of human inquiry.

Under the 'stalking horse' of insanity, as the Duke in As You Like It says of folly, 'wit might shoot its shafts,' Shakspere might deliver what arguments of sceptical philosophy he thought proper, protected by the defence of character implied in Hamlet's state of mind, and want of responsibility.

In the season of 1845, when English plays were acted at Paris, the French critics at once recognised Hamlet as a character which they thought peculiarly French. They said Shakspere had anticipated a state of mind produced by the literature of the past and present centuries. Now that state of mind is one of utter scepticism as to religion, with a distaste of life in the young and enthusiastic. The state of mind ascribed by Hallam to Shakspere, is corroborated by this recognition of the character of Hamlet by the French critics.

Shakspere allows the feeling with which he wrote this play almost unnecessarily to obtrude itself. This is common to Shakspere; possessed with an idea, he repeats it. Thus Francisco, the soldier, relieved from guard, says—

I am sick at heart.

What reason had he to say this? It was the voice of a strong impression in the author, which throws a sombre colouring over the whole scene. Hamlet brings to the conclusion of the play the same sickness of heart.

Horatio, 'the scholar,' would not believe in the ghost, 'the phantasy' of unlearned soldiers: but when the ghost comes amidst his asseverations of contemptuous incredulity, then, like another Thomas, he declares he would not have believed unless he had seen. Throughout the play he is represented as a religious character—a foil to the philosophy and scepticism of Hamlet. Horatio believes in prognostics.

He and the guard enter into a long conversation on the probable cause of the ghost's appearance, and as their surmises all prove wrong, what intention could Shakspere have had, but to satirise conjectures placed on such foundations? He has done the same in other plays.

Horatio, as a scholar, gives them the examples of the apparitions which appeared before the death of Cæsar, which Shakspere afterwards transferred to the play of Julius Cæsar, where by the mouth of Cicero he condemns the drawing inferences from them. When he talks of the 'tenantless graves,' the dead walking in the streets, and the eclipses, he may have had in mind the events which are related to have succeeded the death of Christ, as he elsewhere seems to have borne them in recollection. Nor when the crowing of the cock is made by Horatio to remind the ghost of his guilt, are we sure that Shakspere had not in mind the conviction of St. Peter?

Horatio, on the first appearance of the ghost, was made spokesman, because Marcellus said he was a scholar. On that occasion he did not show any signs of it; but in the midst of his illustrations from history, the ghost appears a second time, and then he pours forth all the reasons for such an appearance, by way of inquiry, as to his mission on earth. When Horatio inquires of the apparition if he is come to look after 'extorted treasure,' as if indignant of the supposition, he prepares to depart, and then Horatio orders him to be stopped—to be cut down if he will not stand, as if he were a thief.

Bernardo seems to think that Horatio had put the right question to him, and that he was going to answer, had not the cock crowed. Horatio thinks it looked like guilt. They were all again wrong in their calculations. Was it not a continuation of the same delicate satire which dictated the preceding?

We do not know whether the crowing of the cock was introduced on the stage, as the text directs; it must have produced a ludicrous impression which we think the restorers of Shakspere would not now venture upon. As if in further illustration of the character of Horatio, and to satirise all supernatural instances, a variety of stories are given of cocks crowing, which Horatio says he believes.

The first lines Hamlet utters are comic, though bold and bitter satires on serious subjects. His first speech is a satire upon the ways of the world in shewing grief. The king and the queen are represented religious; and as the shews of grief were ridiculed by the prince, so are the religious condolements of grief, and pious arguments against the excess of it, used by the murderer of Hamlet's father.

There are none of the real consolations of religion in all that the three say. The mother and the uncle are never made to utter the most apposite remark of a Christian, that the father has gone to heaven, that the son would meet the father again, and that the separation was not eternal. The son does not think of it, and the whole of the play goes to show that he thinks death 'is common' to man as to the rest of the creation—with his uncle, as well as his mother, that it 'is as common as any the most vulgar thing to sense'—in short, that he doubts a future state. This unvarying end of life, from the first known to the last man, without a reservation of one—this vulgar sensible thing death, which universal experience teaches—these are the arguments of the infidel, his very words, almost, when he argues against faith, hope, and futurity.

The grief which is described as 'a fault to nature,' 'to reason most absurd,' is, after all the aspirations of the soul, after eternal life, which do not permit us to throw the body of a human creature to earth, as a dead dog.

That Hamlet, though he was dissatisfied with the world as it was made, had no hope of a better, is evident from his first soliloquy, when he is left to himself after the above conversation. He says—

> Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
> Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
> Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
> How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!
> Fie on't! oh fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
> That grows to seed; things rank, and gross in nature
> Possess it merely.

What are the opening lines but a wish for annihilation of



existence and identity, which, accompanied by the succeeding remarks, give a poetical statement, as it were, of creation and destruction?

The same as his more famous discourse on suicide, 'To be or not to be,' this speech divides itself into two parts—he wishes for death and the common nature of the rest of the world. Either, exclaims he, there was this material end to existence, or there was no religion forbidding suicide. It is remarkable that the divine command against suicide, which is put into the mouth of Hamlet, is not to be found in the Scriptures. It is a bit of school divinity or received opinion which Archbishop Whately says, not being warranted by the authority it assumes, ought not to be used in argument.

We cannot consider his appeal to God, which blames God's world, very reverential. Though not so palpable, it is of the same nature, as those frequent appeals to heaven, which Shakspere's characters make when not pleased with the ways of Providence.

Shakspere puts into the mouth of the prince a simile used by Jesus Christ. The employment of it by the poet would go to the contradiction of a maker of the world, who, in the parable is stated both to sow the seed and watch over the garden. Hamlet is made to say, that all things bad solely possess the world, but the parable describes the world as being only more bad than good; and, consequently, implies the reason of a future state of rewards and punishments.

> Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven,
> Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!
> My father——methinks I see my father.
>
> *Horatio.* O where, my lord?
>
> *Ham.* In my mind's eye, Horatio.

This thought about heaven seems one of those peculiar to Shakspere, which we have noticed in Henry VI.; and which is condemned by Johnson in this play. The thing most disagreeable to Hamlet would be to see an enemy in heaven, which he would suffer rather than have seen the marriage of his mother. A thought strangely at variance with that sentiment of forgiveness, which is happily recommended as the condition of our own pardon, and admission into heaven.

The sudden turn to seeing his father in his mind's eye seems introduced for no other purpose, except to hint that such a vision was a 'trick of the imagination.'

It is remarkable that Hamlet recurs to this idea after he has seen the ghost a first time with witnesses, and even after its second appearance to himself alone:—

> *Hamlet.* Your loves, as mine to you. Farewell.
> My father's spirit in arms! all is not well.
> I doubt some foul play. Would the night were come!
> Till then sit still, my soul. Foul deeds will rise,
> Tho' all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

According to this avowal, he wanted no ghost to tell him what he already suspected, that his father had come to his end by unfair means. He immediately sees the errand of the ghost, which his companions ascribed to everything but the right cause. Yet it does not make the appearance of the ghost more to the purpose. He was not made certain of the fact by the ghost, but immediately doubted; and, for the discovery of guilt, had recourse to human means. In the same way he sees through Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, and proposes to defeat their project on his life by their own death, and afterwards ascribes it to chance or divinity. He kills Polonius, says it is the pleasure of the heavens, and afterwards tells Laertes he was mad when he did it. How can such contradictions be accounted for except on the principle of satire in the writer, who made his character a sceptical jester on such subjects?

Before Hamlet's appointment to meet the ghost, we are introduced to the family of Polonius. Shakspere has put into the mouth of the lady some sarcastic reflections on the priesthood:—

> *Ophelia.* But, good my brother,
> Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
> Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
> Whilst, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
> Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
> And recks not his own read.

The meaning of which appears to be, that priests did not believe what they taught, did what they recommended others not to do, and were not in fear of that they should have



dreaded. The latter part of the idea we shall find to be the germ of one of more open profanity in Macbeth.

Polonius, though not very nice in the practice of morality, delivers the moral philosophy of Shakspere in advice to his son:—

> Beware
> Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,
> Bear't that the opposer may beware of thee.

Similar instruction is given by the Countess to her son, in All's Well That Ends Well. The speech of Polonius is worldly wisdom, but not Christian. He ends with a moral observation peculiar to philosophers of the material school, who put out of view religion as a rule of conduct:—

> This above all—to thine ownself be true;
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.
> Farewell.

The holy vows which Ophelia says Hamlet uses to countenance his love to her, produce some of the usual reflections of Shakspere on oaths—'springes to catch woodcocks.' According to the old man the worst might be expected, if love came in the appearance of religion. As he afterwards says, Satan himself would adopt it. Neither father nor daughter seem to have a very good opinion of religion, its professions, or professors.

Hamlet, whilst waiting for the ghost, and speaking of the addiction to drinking of his countrymen, enters into a philosophical comment on the composition of man, which is made by him to be dependent upon nature and circumstances, not upon the appointments of Providence:—

> So oft it chances in particular men,
> That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
> As, in their birth (wherein they are not guilty,
> Since nature cannot choose his origin),
> By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
> Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason;
> Or by some habit, that too much o'erleavens
> The form of plausive manners, that these men,
> Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
> Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,
> Their virtue's else, be they as pure as grace,

> As infinite as man may undergo,
> Shall in the general censure take corruption
> From that particular fault. The dram of ill
> Doth all the noble substance often dout,
> To his own scandal.

He says, as any necessitarian would say, that what arises from birth is no fault in the man; in which Shakspere seems expressly to controvert, as he does elsewhere, the doctrine of original sin. He speaks in the most material terms of the corruption of man, being the defect of nature, of fortune, or the overgrowth of some complexion, or, as the phrenologists would say, of some organ. He makes necessity to reign supreme from before birth to the conclusion of life, and seems therein to absolve man from all responsibility. These reflections warrant the application to Shakspere of a remark made by Professor Sedgwick in the 'Edinburgh Review, respecting the writer of the 'Vestiges'—'he believes he has annulled all differences between the physical and the moral.

When the ghost first appears to Hamlet, the prince puts very antithetically together a number of religious ideas, and then a number of questions, as to the reason of his resurrection, telling him not to let him 'burst in ignorance.' We cannot see why his bones should be canonised, unless Shakspere wished it to be inferred that canonisation itself, which results from the greatest piety, did not protect from the pains of purgatory, and give rest in heaven. Hamlet ends by asking why the ghost makes

> Us fools of nature,
> So horribly to shake our disposition
> With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?

Here at once is a very material conclusion to a speech, filled with the spiritual, and addressed to a supernatural fact. 'Fools of nature' may mean, make us fools contrary to nature, or fools under the effects of natural causes, which is the way infidels have of arraigning Providence for the use of miracles contrary to their reason. Shakspere seems to declare, what infidels so often do, who will not trouble themselves about religion, that we are fools to trouble ourselves beyond the reaches of our souls, so horribly to have our disposition shaken as some have at the fear of a future state.

Shakspere thus makes Hamlet, in his very first address to, and in presence of, the ghost, deliver a philosophical comment on the supernatural. The religious records in the tables of Hamlet's memory, and his sceptical philosophy, are at once displayed. Fools is rather a favourite expression of Shakspere, when he would express philosophical contempt of mankind. Then they are fools of time, of death, or some other influence. But at first Hamlet uses the presence of the ghost as an argument to his companion of the immortality of the soul, and a reason not to fear death. A religious impression which he is ever to himself and others confronting with his doubts. He says, when they would prevent him following the ghost—

> I do not set my life at a pin's fee;
> And, for my soul, what can it do to that,
> Being a thing immortal as itself?

which, before a stage ghost, is susceptible of a double meaning.

It is certainly remarkable in Shakspere that however philosophic, he cannot long be serious; and characters most grave and tragical he renders laughable. It certainly is not natural, the extent to which Shakspere carries it, though people may have flashes of merriment amidst their melancholy, as Romeo says. Neither do any audience, in the midst of their emotions directed into one course, wish to be deviated from unity of feeling, and have the delusion broken. This observation does not relate to comic scenes introduced into serious dramas, but to scenes which should be serious throughout. We think this indicates a disposition in the author to ridicule ideas for which he had no reverence himself. As a proof of our position, we appeal to the whole of this fifth scene in the first act, as having this mixture of the serious and comic. It may be disputed in the beginning, but must be acknowledged in the end of it.

Having commanded the attention of Hamlet, the ghost, instead of commencing the business which brought him upon earth, tells him it is almost time to go, and enters upon a point of the Roman Catholic religion, purgatory, which must have been odious at that time in England, and which Shakspere takes care to make ridiculous, particularly in the answer

of Hamlet. We think it must have been irresistible on the stage, still more the reply of his father, telling him he does not want his pity, but wants him to be serious, if he can. The observation was rather tart; but Hamlet, professing his filial duty, is answered in a manner which, to persons of susceptible feelings, amounts to a rebuke before it is needed. It is a sort of rap over the knuckles, as given by the village schoolmasters before the boy begins to say his lesson. Certainly the father was not far wrong in the suspicion that Hamlet would not feel himself bound to revenge his murder. Hamlet inquires, impatiently, 'what he is to revenge?' Then, at least, one would think the ghost would tell his own tale, but he immediately returns to the ridiculous account of himself in purgatory, and portrays the harrowing effects of the terrible stories he *could* tell of the infernal regions. All this must evidently have been intended for satire on Romanism, ghostly pretensions, or the descriptions of Virgil or Dante. What strikes us in the character of the ghost, and in this scene, must have probably struck Johnson, who believed in ghosts, when he said the ghost was a 'chatty ghost.' It is not till he has finished all this much ado about nothing without interruption, that he comes to his murder by Hamlet's uncle, which Hamlet, by saying—

O my prophetic soul! my uncle!

acknowledges he had thought over before. The ghost enjoins his son, as he loved his father, to revenge the murder. This was not the delivery of a very Christian precept, in a ghost who had just come from a state of expiation for his sins. Now, one of the greatest Christian offences is revenge, and the ghost came on earth to repeat that very crime. Hamlet might well think he had been tempted of the devil in an appearance so opposite to Christianity; and this ghost returns again to whet his blunted purpose, though there seems no need of such stimulus. In one sense, the play turns upon the passion of revenge; it is the ruling disposition of Hamlet: though sometimes too scrupulously nice in his calculations of vengeance, in the case of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern he delights in planning, and exults in the fulfilment of ample retaliation. His conduct even to Ophelia may be accounted

for from the same vindictiveness of feeling; a malicious defeat of her and her father's designs upon him, which, though ending in the death of her parent and of herself, he does not seem sufficiently to regret. His ideas of heaven and divinity are coupled with retaliation, when he argues that we are given reason, and made superior to the beast, for the purposes of revenge. Laertes is not less vindictive; his whole soul is absorbed in revenge, and for that Hamlet admires him. The ghost had to caution Hamlet not to kill his mother.

On the exit of the ghost, Hamlet is excited by a tumult of religious, hellish, and material thoughts, jocosely intermixed, and ironically condemned. He will wipe out all youthful, religious impressions, as well as other education at college, that the commandment of his father to revenge his death may live alone in his memory; for there was another commandment that had told him 'thou shalt do no murder,' besides the Christian precept not to revenge injuries.

Even in the mouth of Horatio there is put a reflection that there is no necessity for a ghost to tell us what can be made evident without. Every 'wild and hurling word' of Hamlet we think intended for satire, as we never suppose the poet speaks without meaning. Our idea of Shakspere, from the study of him, is, that he has more meaning in his words than any other writer, whilst often he has less meaning outwardly expressed. Whatever controversy there may be about the gravity of the author, in the external exhibitions of the ghost, though the pleasantry may be denied which, as it were, plays around the lips of a wag who would pretend to be serious, yet can any one doubt that Shakspere intended to throw ridicule on the supernatural appearance, when he introduces his ghost to be the butt of Hamlet's jests, and to be treated as one of his clowns? The extravagancies exhibited by Hamlet before his companions, have been excused by the effect the apparition had upon his mind. But Shakspere must be wholly responsible for the speaking, walking, and disparition of the ghost under the boards, and the language addressed to it by Hamlet. The impression which a real ghost might have made almost exclusively the interest of the first Act, is destroyed by this exhibition. What other object

could Shakspere have had but obedience to the impulse of his own mind? Part of the scene we may suppose to be in ridicule of oaths, and a particular oath by the sword, which was used in chivalrous times. Hamlet proposes it to his companions, and the ghost insists upon the same fantastic obligation, which Horatio and Marcellus do not seem to approve. Thence results a long banter of the ghost by Hamlet, to which the reader may turn, to see if it does not warrant our observations. We are told it is not ventured to be acted, probably from the very reasons we have given of its effects. The actors would not know how to reconcile it with the present reading of Hamlet, and the public would come away of one opinion. It seems addressed by the author, or actor, to the body of the house, to make an audience laugh. It is the bye play of the boards: but considering the solemnity of the occasion, and that a departed soul was returned to earth, it is the most profanely ridiculous exhibition imaginable. Here was a ghost come to impose an oath, a religious bond, sworn upon a sword. He came to make a farce of swearing, though told to swear not at all. We are not certain that Shakspere did not intend to satirise—by his ghost underground, by the employment he gives it, by the terms he applies to it, as well as by the derision of it—the idea of any supernatural, spiritual, and unseen power, interposing in men's affairs. Amidst all this apparent nonsense, Hamlet is made to deliver sentiments of philosophy and moral satire. Horatio, quite surprised at these clever evolutions of the ghost, expresses his astonishment:—

> Oh day and night, but this is wondrous *strange!*
> *Hamlet.* And therefore as a *stranger* give it welcome.
> There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dream'd of in our philosophy.

There is manifold meaning in the answer of Hamlet. Shakspere very often plays upon a word, and gives it the first sense that presents itself. What had happened was almost beyond the credulity of Horatio—almost too strange to believe. Hamlet, therefore, tells him to give it the hospitable reception we show to a stranger. But, according to Shakspere, what is strange is not to be assumed as true; neither he nor his Hamlet so regarded what was strange: we do not

receive a stranger into our absolute confidence, and make a 'modern and familiar thing' of him. There was no philosophy in Horatio, neither do we dream in philosophy; Hamlet was the philosopher, not his friend, he therefore rather superciliously treats the power of philosophical comprehension, the depths of intellect in the type of ordinary character. This sentiment seems delivered both in irony of the common faith in things unseen, and the want of knowledge of natural causes. Its meaning may be rendered thus—there are realities in nature, in the revolutions of time and incidents of existence, more wonderful than awestruck superstition can imagine in its dreams.

This scene ends with an imprecation from Hamlet in the language of materialism:—

> The time is out of joint;—O, cursed spite!
> That ever I was born to set it right!

It is worthy of remark, how differently the two, Horatio and Hamlet, acted after seeing the ghost. Horatio was full of the supernatural; he was ready to believe every story which his excited imagination recollected. Hamlet, on the other hand, banters the ghost of his poor father, and banters his companions on the subject; shows no reverential mind, and, spite of the apparition, does not believe in it, or appear to know what to believe or disbelieve. Certainly, Shakspere seems to have taken more pains to discredit his supernatural machinery than any other infidel author, Goethe or Byron, who, as poets, have had to use it.

> *Guildenstern.* Heav'ns make our presence and our practices
> Pleasant and helpful to him.
> *Queen.* Amen!

Considering what the man was, and his companion Rosencrantz, for whom he speaks, this piety, and the Queen's response, is akin with the religious feeling Shakspere gives to all murderers.

Hamlet enters reading, apparently, from some philosophical treatise.

> For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog,
> Being a good, kissing carrion——
> Have you a daughter?

He seems to refer to the creating power of material influence, which was the general opinion of ancient philosophers, and which has lately been advocated by the author of the 'Vestiges of Creation.'

Warburton changed 'good' to God, and interpreted Shakspere as meaning the action of Providence on original sin. 'A noble emendation,' says Johnson, 'which almost sets the critic on a level with the author.'

This is at variance with a preceding speech of Hamlet; at variance with what he afterwards says, and with what Shakspere ever wrote, whilst our interpretation not only agrees with former, but subsequent remarks of Hamlet. Collier returns to the old text of good, and gives the authority of Coleridge in its favour: Coleridge considered the passage to be 'purposely obscure.'

Hamlet, speaking to Guildenstern and Rosencrantz of his melancholy, 'wherefore he knows not,' immediately proceeds to illustrate the consequences of its going so heavily with his disposition. His reflections he divides into two parts. He mentions the excellence of the earth in the way usual to mankind, and then depreciates it as a sterile promontory. Of the still more wonderful heavens, he gives a still more injurious comparison: 'why, it appears no other thing to me, than a foul and pestilential congregation of vapours.' There is no mention of a creator in magnifying the beauties of creation, though Shakspere puts together all that is said in its praise to confront it with the opposite opinion. 'What a piece of work is man,' he says, without thinking of the worker. The attributes of divinity, generally ascribed to him, by which others come partly to the conclusion of man's origin and end, Shakspere gives to be compared with the converse opinion that he is the 'quintessence of dust.' This will be observed to be usual with Shakspere, when a religious reply may be expected. The answer is in everybody's mouth, and might have found a place here. But neither man nor woman pleases Hamlet. The religious considerations are left out of the question.

Hamlet says he will prophecy that Polonius is coming to speak about the players, and salutes him as 'Jephthah, judge of Israel,' and cites some ballad on the subject.

'As by lot, God wot,
It came to pass as most like it was.'—
The first row of the pious chanson will show you more.

What is the meaning of this, but to ridicule the spiritual songs of the Puritans? The 'rubrick,' instead of pious chansons, stood in some editions. It amounts to the same thing—that all explanations of religion were deemed unsatisfactory by Shakspere.

When the player comes to the death of Priam, he says:—

Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! all you gods,
In general synod take away her power:
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
As low as to the fiends.

Had Shakspere confined himself to fortune, this might have passed without observation; but he passes to his usual strictures on the gods.

Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd,
'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounc'd;
But if the gods themselves did see her then,
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs;
The instant burst of clamour that she made,
(Unless things mortal move them not at all,)
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heav'n,
And passion in the gods.

That is, if any man had seen it, he would have pronounced a blasphemous libel on the gods, which Shakspere proceeds to do with a 'but if' of Touchstone to escape controversy. Having made, as before, a comparison between gods and men, in favour of the latter, to contrast further the pity natural to mortals, with the alledged want of compassion in the gods, he makes the actor weep at it, and Polonius cry, 'no more.'

This not only implies disbelief, but attacks, under various names, inactive Providence. The gods impotent, or unwilling, is Lucretian in its atheism. The 'Quarterly,' of June, 1845, in reviewing Brougham's Lives of the Literati of the last Century, says:—'It is no defence of Voltaire's impiety in his plays to say it is spoken of other religions than the Christian, when it was evidently his intention to attack and

make his remarks apply to all creeds, being part of his system to subvert the whole of religion.' We shall see that Shakspere, in this play, as well as elsewhere, repeats the idea in terms which can only apply to the modern and Christian belief in God. When Polonius says he will treat them according to their deserts, Hamlet utters, under certain circumstances, that beautiful morality which inculcates returning good for evil.

Hamlet. Odd's bodikin, man, better. Use every man after his desert, and who shall 'scape whipping! Use them after your own honour and dignity. The less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty.

Hamlet urges revenge by the example of the players; says he is prompted to it by 'heaven and hell,' speaks of the 'miraculous' in common causes and effects, of murder not requiring a tongue to tell it, and then of the spirit he had seen.

> For murther, though it have no tongue, will speak
> With most miraculous organ.
> * * * *
> The spirit, that I have seen,
> May be the devil: and the devil hath power
> T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and, perhaps,
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> (As he is very potent with such spirits)
> Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
> More relative than this.

He is uncertain whether the supernatural proceeds from heaven or hell, from God or the devil; doubts which have reigned in many minds. One from the dead did not persuade him. Polonius tells Ophelia to have a book in her hand to colour her loneliness, which causes Shakspere to go rather out of his way to be severe on religious hypocrisy. The action he recommended to Ophelia, which was merely one to keep up social appearances, could scarcely warrant having said of it—

> We're oft to blame in this,
> 'Tis too much prov'd, that with devotion's visage,
> And pious action, we do sugar o'er
> The devil himself.

The Puritans, the Tartuffes of the age, the butt of infidel scoffs, would be recognised in the description. The king acknowledged it was true of him.

We come to the consideration of the celebrated speech :—

Hamlet. To be, or not to be, that is the question :—
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them? To die—to sleep—
No more; and, by a sleep, to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die?—to sleep?—
To sleep! perchance to dream; aye, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect,
That makes calamity of so long life:
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life;
But that the dread of something after death—
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns—puzzles the will;
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all!
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn away,
And lose the name of action.

'To be or not to be, that is the question'—not only the question of being or not being here, but of future as well as present existence. 'To be or not to be:' the whole question is put, and at once the denial of a future state is made. He seems to assume at once, in answer to his question, that it is nobler to put an end to ourselves and our sufferings; and, he says afterwards, that it is cowardice that prevents us. It is stated, that by taking arms against a sea of troubles, by

opposing, we end them. Yet he had declared before on the religious side of the question, that the divine will was armed against our invasion of our own life; that the Everlasting had fixed his canon against self-slaughter, which, if it signifies anything, means that, instead of ending by opposing a sea of troubles, we incur eternal damnation. He quits established opinion, all pressure past, and assumes at once the certain side of the question. He thinks that in dying we renounce for ever all identity. Of this he is satisfied, and he has no hope of an hereafter, though afterwards afraid of its possibility. To die, is to sleep, to be no more: the solution of life is 'the all,' and the 'end all here.' To sleep and be no more, are the very words which we find used in Measure for Measure, and which excited the indignation of Johnson as the most positive denial language could produce of an hereafter. The 'No more,' which Shakspere is so fond of employing with regard to death, and which Knight says, is equivalent to the French *rien de plus*—nothing more, precludes everything future.

Hamlet exults in the idea that by a sleep, all the attributes of life are for ever extinct. He talks not even of the probability, but of the certainty of annihilation; and delighted with the prospect, prays, as it were, earnestly and internally, that this may be the consummation against which others so devoutly pray: a consummation, be it remarked, utterly inapplicable to the divinity, repugnant to the nature of men, and the designs of his creation—that is, if we are to compare these sentiments with received canons of faith.

Here the infirmity of Hamlet's disposition—the oscillation in thought as well as in action, the irresolution common to men's ideas on religious subjects, produce a change in his ideas. He had disposed of the question summarily, and had decided that if it was not, as it had appeared, the nobler part to die, at least such a certainty of oblivion was to be wished. Here is a natural approach to the religious side of the question. We have a possibility of the truth, not the certainty of a future state, though the ghost of his father had answered these questions by the fact of his reappearance. Religion presents itself to him, as the defeat of his hopes and expectations, it sets him afloat again amidst

a sea of troubles, and he paints the effects of religion not in its hopeful aspects, but in its terrifying forms. He repeats again, 'to die, to sleep,' as if resolved to end this distraction of thought and purpose. He puts it as a query, and receives no solution. He hugs, as it were, the idea as set at rest. What an advance he had made in the progress of scepticism from his speech before seeing the ghost! He appears quickly to have lost the impression of the ghostly visitation he had experienced. He repeats 'to sleep,' and the word, as it were, suggests to his memory the accompaniment of sleep—our dreams. There is a chance, there is a possibility; he says that we dream: 'Perchance to dream, what dreams may come must give us pause—there's the rub, the respect that makes calamity of so long life.' What a way to speak of the future state, and the immortality of the soul! There is probably no infidel, no materialist, who would deny all possibility of a future state, but would allow there might be a chance of it. In this and in other respects, Shakspere employs the usual language of materialism. If tired of life, as Hamlet was, materialists speak of annihilation as agreeable to their wishes as well as their reason—as the haven of everlasting rest from a sea of troubles.

The evil in this world being to Hamlet much greater than the good—who, of his opinion, would not surrender existence for exemption from sense, feeling, and personality? 'but that the dread of something after death, the undiscoverable bourn from whence no traveller returns, puzzles the will.' What gives to Christians hope, patience to bear life, and peace on the death bed, is an 'unravelled' puzzle to his perturbed mind. In bitterness of spirit he is made to speak of religion, not as alleviating all the ills he mentions, but as something making weak the will. He speaks of a life to come as the undiscovered country—as if that which everybody had been in search of, nobody had found—as if there had been no especial revelation of a life to come. 'Making us rather bear those ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of'—as if religion was an 'unknown fear,' as Lafeu said. Shakspere repeats the old story of the wise of the earth—ignorance is the mother of superstition—or, in

common with Lucretius, representing religion as the effect of fear. Elsewhere, Shakspere says you are religious because you fear. Hamlet says, no one who has passed the bourn, the boundary between life and death, ever returned: not the one who did return and discovered the country to his followers; nor the ghost whom he had just seen, who, delaying speaking of his own affairs, had spoken to the reality of the dread of something after death.

Though he had spoken of shaking off this mortal coil, yet the dread of a something makes him afraid men might live again in the flesh; and the sufferings of mind, the natural shocks, the ills we have, perchance might be worse in a life to come. 'Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all.' Now conscience and religion are often used as synonymes, and indifferently stand for the same thing in Shakspere: here it is employed in the sense of religion.

Richard III. uses conscience only as the dread of after death, which he tells his soldiers is the word of cowards. Mrs. Griffiths, writing on the morality of Shakspere, thinks the question of suicide should not be entertained, and passes over this speech. Dr. Johnson thinks it necessary to give a paraphrase of it, which turns it from a consideration of suicide, to a consideration of the possibility of his own death in bringing to punishment the murderer of his father.

In the dialogue between Hamlet and Ophelia, the necessity for the discontinuance of the human species is given as the cause for breaking off all further intercourse of love between him and her. He reflects on his own family as exhibited in his mother and uncle, and thinks that such stock cannot be inoculated by virtue, or transformed by beauty into honesty; and though he says he is accounted honest, he draws a picture of himself, expressive of the utter depravity of man.

What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven?

I say, we will have no more marriages; those that are married already, all but one, shall live, the rest shall keep as they are.

These views are very material. The Christian sees original sin leavening the mass, but does not therefore profanely propose to put a stop to the creation. He considers men as the

heirs of immortality, and existence the right and benefit of posterity. Hamlet considers morality, in this place, and Shakspere everywhere, as a phrenological or physical succession. He had spoken of the world as a garden overgrown with weeds; and he here recommends all the stock to be removed as utterly worthless, and too deteriorated to be improved. The evil circumstances are in his view overpowering; and we, of the nineteenth century, might think we heard a disciple of George Combe, or Robert Owen, lecturing on the evils of society.

Hamlet, in his instructions to the players, says he has seen some persons—

> Not to speak it profanely, that neither having the accent of Christian, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

The creation of man was not a subject to make a joke of, and Shakspere thought it might not be well received, and prefaces his remarks with an apology for their profanity—a line of defence which his commentators and admirers have followed. Not only this idea, but almost the words have been copied by Burns, when he says God made the lasses after he had tried his 'prentice hand on man. Burns was as fond of profanity as Shakspere; and no one can doubt the animus of the Scotch poet, in some of his pieces, satirising the truth of Christianity.

Hamlet prophetically remarks, that a great man's memory will be forgotten long before that of the pious man, who leaves behind him monuments of piety and devotion. Saints live much in the memory of the people during their lives; and after death, their doings undergo a process of accumulation, whilst all the industry of historians can now scarcely add an authentic particular to the life of Shakspere. Whatever anecdote they do produce, shows him more in the character of a sinner than a saint; and whilst his admirers reject these illustrations of the man, they have not been able to produce a single instance of his piety. The probability is, that the reverence which he showed to no person or subject, was the reason that no reverence was extended to him. Irreverence

does not produce reverence; it affects alike, with an indifference, the giver and the taker. Had Shakspere lived at another time, when the tide set in towards irreverence, he would have been recollected as the champion of progress, and gone down to posterity with all the particulars of a Molière or Voltaire: but when he did die, so far as he was personally concerned, he might put as his own epitaph, 'For O, for O, the hobby-horse is forgot.' He was looked upon in no better light than *that* amusement of the people, which was suppressed by puritanical influence. They who sought to live in the memory of that age, left pious monuments behind them: the works of Strype, the acts of Laud, the 'Paradise Lost' of Milton, would give more chance of immortality to their persons. Hume says, of Essex, that the way to gain popular influence, and the reverence and devotion of the pious at the end of Elizabeth's reign, was not the giving of amusements to the people, but having prayers and preachers in his house open to the public.

The player king says:—

> Our wills and fates do so contrary run,
> That our devices still are overthrown;
> Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.

It is made questionable whether our wills and our thoughts are ours; whether they are providentially or necessarily influenced: but no Christian can think our ends are directed by the fates or necessity. This ought to be, in fact, the motto of the play: it is the theme on which it discourses—it is the action of the piece. As Knight said, it is the empire of chance [or fate] which is made to dispose events, and bring about ends most contrary to the wills, thoughts, and devices proposed by the *dramatis personæ*.

Rosencrantz says to Hamlet, 'My lord, you once did love me.' Hamlet. 'And do so still, by these pickers and stealers:' a light appropriation of the church catechism and command, to keep our hands from picking and stealing.

When Guildenstern and Rosencrantz are commissioned by the king to murder Hamlet, Guildenstern says:—

> We will provide ourselves;
> Most holy and religious fear it is
> To keep those many, many bodies safe,
> That live and feed upon your Majesty.

As usual—a religious sanction put into the mouths of evil doers. Having prepared to execute the murder of Hamlet, more piety is put into the mouth of this king. He retires and kneels, in which attitude Hamlet comes suddenly upon him. Hamlet says now he might kill him, but is prevented by his revenge and religion. The prince is made to believe that by this act of devotion the murderer of his father would go to heaven. Shakspere takes this opportunity of giving Hamlet some horrid reflections, if taken literally. Hamlet says, that sending the king to heaven would not be revenge, but rewarding his crimes.

Hamlet. Now might I do it pat, now he is praying.
And now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven.
And so am I reveng'd? that would be scann'd:
A villain kills my father, and for that
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
O this is hire and salary, not revenge.
He took my father grossly, full of bread,
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;
And how his audit stands, who knows, save heav'n?
But in our circumstance and course of thought,
'Tis heavy with him. Am I then reveng'd,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?
No.
Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent;
When he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage,
Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed,
At gaming, swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't;
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heav'n;
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black
As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays;
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

This, however, if supposed to be delivered in a jocose style, (a style, by the way, most incompatible with the occasion) takes away from the diabolical coolness with which this horrible resolution is clothed. Johnson says: 'This speech, in which Hamlet, represented as a virtuous character, is not content with taking blood for blood, but contrives damnation

for the man that he would punish, is too horrible to be read or to be uttered.' He said the same of the same idea delivered by Iden on the body of Jack Cade. Johnson was tender on the subject, because he sincerely believed in the doctrine of hell. Shakspere, on the other hand, had no delicacy about it, because he believed it not. That what the one does, the other would not have read or uttered, clearly indicates the different states of mind—the reverential and the irreverential, the believer and the infidel.

Hamlet, on seeing the ghost the second time, says:—

> His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
> Would make them capable.

This seems an allusion to the sacred words, referring to Christ, that had not the people, the stones would have become capable and acknowledged him. In his recommendation to his mother to abstain from the king's bed, he says:—

> For use can almost change the stamp of Nature,
> And master even the devil, or throw him out
> With wondrous potency.

This idea is evidently taken from the miraculous power of casting out devils—a power which Shakspere here ascribes to habit. Hamlet says of Polonius:—

> For this same lord,
> I do repent: but heaven have pleas'd it so,
> To punish this with me, and me with this,
> That I must be their scourge and minister.
> I will bestow him, and will answer well
> The death I gave him.

Hamlet had at first ascribed Polonius's fate to fortune; he now considers it religiously, and ascribes the act to Providence, which is making Hamlet acknowledge a divine power in things, where there is no credit attached to the dispensation. Had Hamlet killed the king, instead of deferring his death to a moment more fit for hell, the lives of the innocent—Polonius, Ophelia, and Laertes—had been spared: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern had not become worthy of death, and would have spared Hamlet the contrivance of their execu-

tion, which he treats as a skilful and agreeable manœuvre, in which Providence assists him. This is not giving a moral to religion—the making its interference unbecoming. This lays Shakspere open to the imputation of Johnson, that he has not attended to that moral justice and fitness attributed to the ways of Providence.

Hamlet ends the scene by telling the spectators that he knows the purport of the letters entrusted to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: they show him the way to what he admits is knavery—not open counteraction, but secret undermining. He says, sweet is such a method of retaliation; and Shakpere, after having once made it the sport of fortune, will, on second thoughts, ascribe it to Providence. After having lamented that he should be the occasion of the death of Polonius, and accommodated it to the sentiments of religion, which were satirical of those of Shakspere's days, he jocularly takes a material farewell of the dead body.

Had Shakspere been inclined to religion, he might, as the author of Atala and Rena, have introduced there consolations of religion, which elicit the sympathy of spectators and readers, for the doers as well as the victims of misfortune. Instead of which, he treats the possession of an immortal soul according to his own rule, with cynical levity. He contemplates the death of others as a sweet satisfaction, while he makes a joke of one already dead, as being 'all over with him.'

When inquiry is made after the body to bring it to the consecrated chapel, and give it the rites of burial and hopes of resurrection, he says, 'he has compounded it with dust whereto 'tis kin.' As if the thoughts of an hereafter was unnecessary. Giving a body Christian burial, Shakspere makes the thought of many of his characters: they will do all they can for those whom they have intentionally killed. Hamlet shows no disposition of the kind. Shakspere, by the reflections and the conduct of Hamlet, makes a prospective mockery of religion, and continues his material jests from the scene of death to another of the grave.

When the king asks Hamlet where is Polonius? he says at supper—

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten; a certain con-

vocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes but to one table. That's the end.

King. Alas, alas!

Ham. A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

King. What dost thou mean by this?

Ham. Nothing, but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar.

He would show, like a modern philosopher, the circular and material courses of nature, animate and inanimate. The end of us is the beginning of others; so we go round the circle—and as the beggar does not differ from the king, the worm and the man are one. He mentions a future state only in jest. On being asked again by the king where is Polonius, he answers in one of Richard's jokes:—

In heaven, send thither to see: if your messenger find him not there, seek him i' th' other place yourself. But, indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

When the king says his purposes are good, Hamlet says—'I see a cherub that sees them,' meaning, if it means anything, that I see them about as much as I see the guardian angel said to watch over each of us. He seeks in the army of Fortinbras, as an occasion to spur himself on to revenge:—

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unus'd. Now whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th' event,
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom,
And ever three parts coward—I do not know
Why yet I live to say, 'This thing's to do;'
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means
To do't. Examples, gross as earth, exhort me:



Witness this army of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit, with divine ambition puff'd,
Makes mouths at the invisible event;
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
Ev'n for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great,
Is not to stir without great argument;
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw,
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That for a fantasy and a trick of fame
Go to their graves like beds; fight for a plot,
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain?—O, then, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth.

Man, 'in feeding and sleeping,' is no more than the beast; and this faculty in looking before and after, is to be used in the execution of vengeance. But the ability to look before and after, which, he says, gives us precedence over the beast, makes him return to the idea of his speech, 'To be or not to be,' that the looking before us prevents the leap into action. Therefore, he says not to have satisfied his revenge, is a bestial oblivion of the past, or arises from the craven scruple of thinking too precisely on the event. He thinks this thought of death, if it has one part wisdom, in the conjecture of an hereafter, has at least three parts coward. He encourages himself not to have the apprehension of death, by thinking of the spirit of the army before him, making mouths at the invisible event, and the imminent death of twenty thousand men, who, for a fantasy, go to their graves as to their beds.

No hope of heaven or an hereafter strikes the loving and filial Ophelia; nor the consolation that there, father and daughter would meet again. The contrary of these ideas only occurs to her, and that her brother will revenge her father's death. The sudden and violent end of her father evokes no more religious sentiments in her, than did the sight of his corpse produce in Hamlet. The sane Hamlet made

a joke of his death as regarded his victim, though he delivered some notions regarding his own agency in the work of blood, which Shakspere makes Edmund, in Lear, ironically speak of as 'a divine thrusting on.' Ophelia made really mad by the bereavement, her insanity does not turn to religion, but irreligion; whereas persons the least impressed with religious sentiments, are driven to their morbid consideration under the effects of insanity; and lunatics have often more and firmer faith in the invisible, than those who are left in possession of their senses. Turning to the possibility of an hereafter, she expresses what often occurs in Shakspere, and may to people who reason irreligiously :—

Well, God, 'ield you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but we know not what we may be. God be at your table!

King. Conceit upon her father.

Shakspere takes care to have these words of Ophelia applied by the king. Now, the first is a heathen conceit, disavowed by Christianity. It is one put by philosophers, who, struck by the close connection of life with matter, have supposed life shared with it. The foundation of these ideas has been touched upon by Hamlet, and will be still further commented on by him in the same strain. This principle is the foundation of materialism. Ophelia says, we are certain of this life, but we cannot be certain of that which religion teaches—that we are, after all, entirely ignorant of what we may be. Could sentiments more sceptical be delivered, and at a time when people speak the impressions of their minds, as seen in the indecent songs which Ophelia, probably for the first time, repeated aloud in company, however long she had known them?

God be at your table,

in connection with the above, and addressed to the king, seems a repetition of the idea which Shakspere had on the same occasion given to Hamlet, when he told the king that he and the beggar were but two dishes to one table. After all these philosophical reflections, Ophelia has the charity to hope that God may be present at his table when he gives a feast to the worm—which, if not delivered doubtingly of



God, the idea is certainly ironically spoken of that God would, in his death, favour with his divine presence so great a sinner as the king. She does not even think that God will see justice done her father, but leaves it to be executed by her brother.

Laertes is no philosopher, but a man of the world, caring neither for belief nor disbelief; full of passion, a contrast to Hamlet, particularly after the prince's last speech, in which he blames himself for thinking too precisely on the event, and would inspire himself with courage at the sight of soldiers making mouths at the invisible event. Laertes says:—

> How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with:
> To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!
> Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
> I dare damnation: To this point I stand,—
> That both the worlds I give to negligence,
> Let come what comes: only I'll be reveng'd
> Most thoroughly for my father.

What a difference between the prince and Laertes, and their objects the same—vengeance for their fathers? Shakspere shows the effects of religion on both, and in every variety of character in this play he seems to aim at an illustration of persons under religious circumstances.

Ophelia sings a ditty to the effect that he never will come again, and cries, 'Gramercy on his soul?' and says of it, 'and of all Christian souls!—God be wi' you!' This introduction of religion is suggestive to Shakspere of one of his old and oft repeated forms of impiety. Laertes says, 'Do you see this, O God?' In the passage of the player on the death of Priam, conveying the same reproaches of Providence, Shakspere put 'the gods': here it is God, in his individuality. The idea supposes deity to be blind, or insensible. It is Lucretian philosophy, distilled through a pagan and a Christian medium. Shakspere then puts one of his horrid jocularities into the mouth of Laertes, making him in that coincide with Hamlet:—

> What would you undertake
> To show yourself your father's son indeed
> More than in words?
> *Laer.* To cut his throat i' th' church.

King. No place indeed should murder sanctuarise,
Revenge should have no bounds.

The first sentiment given the king may be true, but the other is an unchristian sentiment in direct defiance of religion.

Ophelia, in her positive madness, again seems a contrast with Hamlet. Ophelia does not talk about suicide, gives no time for a progressive disturbance of her intellects, wants no ghost to distract her, but from the violence of love, grief, and checked affections, goes straight mad and drowns herself. She again, too, is a religious and metaphysical contrast in mind, ideas, sex, temperament, and force of circumstances. All the principal characters necessary to the plot are formed to illustrate states of mind. Even Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are types of those who see their god and their religion in the king and the state. They are characters to be found under all absolute governments, of which there were plenty of instances in Shakspere's times, and which now are to be found in Austria and Russia. They do not question who of right is on the throne—whether he is good or bad: if there, he is there by divine appointment, and it is part of their faith to obey him even in wrong actions.

But apart from the characters necessary to the plot, Shakspere introduces a number of episodes, personages, and events, not necessary to the progress of the play, deviating indeed from its courses and developments, in order to illustrate the same train of ideas. We have seen the players introduced and delivering a speech, partly to point out the apparent insensibility of Providence in the direction of events, but more especially to show what effect the mere image of death and murder has on the feelings of spectators. These persons are moved by the fiction, which gives an opportunity to Hamlet of reflecting on what has delayed his passion, when to him such horrors have actually happened, and heaven has called upon him to revenge. Again, the army of Fortinbras is introduced for no other reason than to show how little some men care for death, and to give Hamlet the opportunity of another speech to the same effect. Now the gravediggers are introduced just to show how little they care for death, and to make Hamlet moralise on the subject, amidst skulls and bones, not as the monks of old, to set their



thoughts on high, but in the contemplation of the reality, to learn to meet death as nothing.

Hamlet had the ghost of his father to be the butt of his jests, and a dead body, killed from the commencement of the dialogue between him and his mother, had been lying there to the end, to whet his wits. Now the churchyard, and the making of a grave for Ophelia, will lead the clowns and prince, not in deed, but in words, to play at 'loggats' with bones and their conclusions.

In the first scene of the fifth act we have a church and two clowns with spades and mattocks. The first clown says—

Is she to be buried in Christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

The gravediggers employed on their business are made to commence the mockery of death, burial, and resurrection. As is very usual with Shakspere, when he has furnished objections to religion in every serious and oft-repeated form, he introduces clowns to make a burlesque of everything sacred. In Measure for Measure there is a striking illustration of this. Here salvation and redemption are treated in the style of Dogberry and Verges. Here the clowns operate on the arguments so much agitated by Hamlet. The canon the Everlasting had fixed against self-slaughter, the dread of something after death, vanishes before the wit of the clown. In his idea, suicide is seeking your own salvation. Suicide is not condemned, but the regulations of law and the church, with regard to *felo de se*, are satirised by the clowns for allowing Christian burial to Ophelia, and condemned by Laertes for not permitting all the funeral observances.

2nd *Clown*. Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out of Christian burial.

1st *Clown*. Why, there thou say'st. And the more pity, that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even Christian.

However justly democratic are the observations of the clowns with regard to the rich assuming all the consolations of religion, there was no need to jest at their license in disregarding religion. Equally democratic are the succeeding

observations of the clowns; but Shakspere's want of respect towards gentlemen equally falls on the Scriptures, which serve as the handle to his satire. The language seems borrowed from them. 'What art a heathen? how dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says—' No doubt this was after the manner of serious controversy of the day. There is some conceit in the comparisons between churches, gallows, and graves, as to which lasts the longest, but we cannot attempt to fathom it all. The decision in favour of the grave seems material: there is no mention of a future state, except the wit upon it; no hint of more equal justice hereafter, and we may say of Shakspere, as Hamlet says of the gravedigger, he had no feeling for the business. Hamlet now enters. When the clown digs and sings a love ditty over his work, the prince is much astonished that a gravedigger should make nothing of his employment, as he was at the army in confronting death without fear.

Hamlet. Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?

Horatio. Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

Ham. 'Tis e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

Probably Shakspere meant that all these questions of life and death were very well as speculations of the rich, but not of the poor. This, to a certain degree, is true to experience. The poor generally look to death as a relief from the labours and miseries of life, while the rich having a daintier sense, and sometimes an excessive fear of it, are unwilling to give up the enjoyments of life for an uncertain lot in a future state. The second stanza of the clown is to the effect that age coming upon him, puts him into the earth; upon which, Hamlet falls into the same mood, reflecting upon the different professions of the owners of the skulls he picks up; he wonders at the revolutions death has made in them; and as if answering the ditty of the clown, says:—

That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once; how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder! It might be the pate of a politician, which this ass o'er-offices; one that would circumvent God, might it not?

Horatio. It might, my lord.



This idea, spoken of a man by a man, is not very respectful to Providence, and seems to imply that the said politician was a disbeliever. Hamlet could get no answer out of the more religious Horatio, who did not approve of these reflections, and at last signified his dissent. It seems that Hamlet thought that Horatio was one of those that would not, or could not, see the intention of his remarks. He says :—

Why, e'en so; and now my lady Worms; chapless, and knocked about the mazzard with a sexton's spade. Here's a fine revolution, if we had the trick to see't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with them? mine ache to think on't.

He hints there is something more in it than the mere apparent change from life to death, but it is beyond the thought of the vulgar. He wonders as much at the indifference, or obtuseness, of his friend, as he did at the gravedigger's. He seemed not to have the 'trick' to see these material views, of which Hamlet is so sensible, that the thought of them makes his 'bones ache.' Hamlet reverts to his former speeches on the uses of this world, and their apparent nothingness to him. He finds in the review of these bones an answer in fact, as well as theory, of his question, what is man? All this admirable display of invention only to be tossed about by a sexton's spade, or the continents of these capacities only to play bowls with! In allowing it, he grants it is a mortifying reflection, but it does not strike him to be the less true. Shakspere makes the clown's song chime in with these opinions as he throws up a skull :—

A pick-axe and a spade, a spade,
For—and a shrouding sheet:
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

'There's another,' says Hamlet, which he makes out to be a lawyer's skull.

Hamlet. Is this the fine of his fines, the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? He has got, he says, the length and breadth of a pair of indentures. The very conveyance of his hands will hardly lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more? ha!

Horatio. Not a jot more, my lord.

It cannot be that Hamlet would be made so often to expa-

tiate upon, and demand an answer to, such a self-evident proposition, that a dead body takes up less space in the world and the world's affairs than a living one, if the dialogue was not mixed up with those moral and metaphysical speculations as to man's soul being at an end. When the prince comes to Shakspere's usual 'no more,' he laughs, and the seriousness of Horatio is laughable as mistaking Hamlet's conclusion when he says 'not a jot more,' and the clown again repeats the same song. Hamlet inquires of him how long will a body last before it loses all identity, and is restored to the universe of matter? deliberately going from the space it still holds after death, to the time when no trace of it is left. But he returns to the thought of the body previous to total decay, and his reflections on the skulls, when he meets with one of a friend:—

Alas, poor Yorick!—I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest; of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times, and now how abhorred my imagination is! my gorge rises at it.

Poor Hamlet! his daintier sense disgusted at the present, even his imagination consoles him with no prospect of a meeting between him and his friend, whom twenty three years gone, he treats as ever dead, and never thinks to see the corruptible exchanged for the incorruptible. As man in general was described as excelling in all perfections, and as a quintessence of dust, so Yorick, in particular, is praised for his powers of intellect to be represented still more fallen in death. Those he inspired, are alike no more; and let a woman strive, says Hamlet, to be ever so apparently beautiful, and repair her charms, to this she must come—let her laugh at this. Not one word of anything which may save them from the bitterness of this state in the prospect of a better.

Hamlet, now determined to have some answer from Horatio, puts a direct question leading to his opinions:—

Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

Hor. What's that, my lord?

Ham. Dost thou think, Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

Hor. E'en so.



Ham. And smelt so? Puh!

Hor. E'en so, my lord.

Ham. To what base uses we may return, Horatio! why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

Hor. 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

Ham. No, 'faith, not a jot: but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it; as thus, Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Having shown that all professions and the rarest intellects were alike resolved into dust, from those recently departed, he proceeds to the consideration of one dead in a long distance of time, and takes the conqueror of a world to show that he, in common with the conquered, came but to the same end:—

> Imperial Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
> Oh, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
> Should patch a wall, to expel the winter's flaw!

What can be the tendency of these comparisons, but that, however superior we may think one is to another, the same material results happen to all—to the highest as well as the lowest—and thence the inference that our superiority in the creation, as a class, does not, as we suppose, entitle us to something after death, any more than that superiority of one over the other saves us from the common consequences of mortality. In support of such an inference, he had already tried to trace to the king those material revolutions of life and death, animate and inanimate clay, which happen to king and beggar, worm and fish, as parts of the same, of one course and circle for ever. Now, in the case of Alexander, dropping the interchange of existence in matter, he shows how after many ages are past, our return to base uses may be seen and imagined without the recollection of our divine origin and promised immortality. There is no conceivable reason why Hamlet, unless by this time wilfully sceptical, should not refer to the saving clauses of the Christian scheme. They are the most obvious reflections. They occur to persons of the commonest parts and the narrowest

information. To a man of Hamlet's powers and temperament, they must have occurred with great force. It is evident that Shakspere intentionally kept them back.

It will be seen that the Duke priest, in Measure for Measure, will say, that so far from being noble, all the qualities on which we pride ourselves are nursed by baseness, that we are not ourselves in life, but mixed up so with matter, that we cannot claim any separate identity—the issue of dust being our daily existence; thence we come, on that we live, and to that we go. To show how destruction was intimately connected with creation, and that life was no more than death, was the purpose of the priest to prepare Claudio for the passage from life to death. Thus Hamlet reasons in order to come to the same conclusion; and having once had a religious apprehension of an hereafter, he more especially directs his attention to what base uses we may return, that the nobility of our nature might not lead him to think there was anything beyond, after the apparent evidence given in death and the grave.

In that inquiring way which scepticism uses in order not to shock religion, Hamlet asks why he may not prosecute his philosophical and irreverential searches into nature after death. Horatio answers as the religious are used to do. His remark is as modern and universal as the replies of Posthumous, in Cymbeline, are to the infidelity of the gaoler. This is a proof the more what was the object of Shakspere in introducing these questions, and to which side he inclined when he gave popular prejudices to the one and reason to the other—when he flung only the language of the world into the one scale, but threw the whole force of his wit, his understanding, and all the graces of composition into the other. St. Paul called the prying into what we could not see, instead of taking for granted what is told us, the entertaining vain questions, and recommended faith, which course has been followed by all orthodox divines. Horatio answers as one who had profited by such precepts of Christianity, and at once condemns Hamlet. Hamlet showed a contrary disposition from the very first, and here the natures of Hamlet and Horatio come into conflict. Horatio is roused to utter the first negative he has used to Hamlet. The prince, who

had asked leave to think and do as he liked—as science, fashion, and riches are wont — appears indignant at the dissent which forbids the employment of reason, and denies the caution of Horatio by a form of adjuration which might convey a reproach to Horatio and those of his mode of thinking—'*No, faith*, not a jot.' At once Shakspere asserts the supremacy of reason over faith. 'Inquire too curiously, say you, Horatio? No, no, not a jot,' is the decided language of Hamlet. 'We may follow Alexander to what he is. Such inquiries we may follow with modesty, as long as probability and experience guide us, and we do not jump from one groundless supposition to another.' Now, the style in which Shakspere makes Hamlet treat Alexander and the subject in general, shows great modesty, allowing the propriety of investigating it by reason. We can see no end that Shakspere had in view, by this endeavour to demonstrate that we live after death in every variety of form, except to furnish the great physical and chemical objections, as Sir James Mackintosh admits they are, to the resurrection of the dead, founded on our bodies being resolved and diffused eternally into the constituent elements of other bodies.

In laying down the abstract principles of reasoning, Shakspere gives us an example of Baconion induction, in the passage beginning, 'as thus Alexander died.' It is in a scoffing ballad that he apostrophises 'Imperial Cæsar.'

When they have brought Ophelia to the grave, Laertes abuses the priest—which is the third time that the church, in the person of its officers, has been attacked in this play :—

> I tell thee, churlish priest,
> A minist'ring angel shall my sister be,
> When thou liest howling.

Shakspere's characters always think of the horrible in a future state. This is not the only time that 'howling' is introduced in connection with this idea.

In the whole of this scene, and to the last, the conversation between Hamlet and Horatio is that of an irreligious with a religious friend, trying to make him agree in his views by those arguments most suited to him, dropping what might be offensive, and bringing forward what the courtesy of society, if not private affection, requires of one to the other.

In the previous scene of the grave, Hamlet had taxed Horatio's patience to the utmost; the prince could not stay his own irresistible impulses, though Horatio would check them. The amiable prince would afterwards, as it were, make amends in a series of apologies to his friend. It was an after thought of the inimitable art of the poet. In the first draught of this play by our poet, Horatio describes to the queen the fate of Guildenstern and Rosencrantz:—

Queen. But what became of Guildenstern and Rosencrantz?

Horatio. He being set ashore, they went for England, and in the packet there writ down that doom to be performed on them pointed for him: and arising by great chance he had his father's seal, so all was done without discovery.

The present text gives us this account only:—

Hamlet. Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep: methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly,
And praised be rashness for it—Let us know
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do fail; and that should teach us,
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them as we will.

Hor. That is most certain.

What is the first part of this but praising chance, fate, or circumstance above forethought—the external above the internal? But Horatio gratefully responds it. Critics tell us, that Shakspere here fell into the conventional cant of a mechanic making skewers. But it is no detraction to cull the best phrases from the most common sources. Knight remarks:—'Philosophy, as profound as it is beautiful! says the uninitiated reader of Shakspere. But he that is endued with the wisdom of the commentators, will learn how easy it is to mistake for philosophy and poetry what really only proceeded from the very vulgar recollection of an ignorant mind. Dr. Farmer informs me, says Steevens, that these words are merely technical. A woodman, butcher, and dealer in skewers, lately observed to him, that his nephew (an idle lad), could only assist in making them; he could rough-hew them, but I was obliged to shape their ends. To shape the ends of wood skewers, *i. e.* to point them,



requires a degree of skill: any one can rough-hew them. Whoever recollects the profession of Shakspere's father, will admit that his son might be no stranger to such terms. I have frequently seen packages of wool pinned up with skewers.' If this be the state of the case, the players who were of a sceptical and irreverential turn, and must have known what Shakspere's opinions were, must have made merry with the idea; and to the audience who were more familiar with the ways of mechanics than the ways of Providence, these words must have conveyed a sense of the ridiculous, which would be heightened by the touch of simplicity given in the answer of Horatio.

Before, however, passing from this passage, it is proper to remark the strange jumble of philosophy it presents. If our 'indiscretion sometimes serves us well,' as Hamlet commences by affirming, and there is at the same time 'a divinity that shapes our ends,' it would appear that he shapes them to little purpose. 'Indiscretions' should be made instruments of moral punishment—never 'to serve us well.' Hamlet must have thought Horatio a simpleton when he received the assurance, that of two such contradictory ideas—*both* were 'most certain.'

Collier says, when he comes to 'and that should teach us'—'The reasoning in this passage is consecutive in Hamlet's mind, but, perhaps, hardly so in his expressions.' This agrees with our interpretation—Shakspere never meant it for reasoning. It was entirely another view of the case, for another purpose, and meant, by Hamlet, for another, not for himself. The player king had delivered the same sentiment in more material terms.

We must suppose from Hamlet's speech that he knew the commission with which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were entrusted, or that he had shrewd suspicions of its nature. We might suppose that Shakspere had introduced this as a cause of the discovery of the contents of their despatches, instead of which he makes it the effect of restlessness at night that would not let him sleep. In the original play this was ascribed to chance; but in the folio, the incident is given to Providence, by the introduction of those celebrated lines on divinity superintending our actions. It may be said,

that the majority of passages of Shakspere are directly opposed to this admission of a Providence. It may be said, that Shakspere changed it in deference to public opinion, which would not like this constant reference to chance and no guiding control. It may be said to be in keeping with the character of Hamlet, with his alternate vacillations of mind, and his being under a supernatural influence through the ghost, who came to direct his actions, and whose object would have been lost had the king's been fulfilled. It may be said to be a touch of nature given to Hamlet, who, after stating he had acted he did not know under what impulses, draws from it a conclusion so agreeable to the sentiments of his friend, who again has an opportunity of displaying his character, by the eager and undoubted assent he gives to the proposition of Hamlet—that we should be taught, by such occurrences, that we act by divine direction. We have already given an instance where Hamlet is made to assign his hand in the death of Polonius to divine influence. All these, or some of these, reasons, may have caused Shakspere to assign Providence where chance formerly stood as a cause. But having assigned a reasonable cause, the natural desire Hamlet would have to get at the real instructions of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, we think Shakspere intended no compliment to Providence, when he put it in the place of chance; the more so when the commentators tell us, that when Shakspere altered it to Providence, he inserted the whole previous soliloquy in which Hamlet, speaking by himself, and to himself, says he already knew the designs of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and would have fine sport in turning them against themselves. After this, the employment of the term Providence appears in the prince but as a play upon the religious sentiment of his favourite.

Hamlet is made to satisfy his cruel piety, or hellish humour, by giving his orders to have Guildenstern and Rosencrantz put to death—

> Not shriving time allowed.
> *Horatio.* How was this seal'd?
> *Ham.* Why, even in that was heaven ordinant;
> I had my father's signet in my purse.

The style in which Providence a second time is introduced,

considering the result, looks as if irony were intended. He might think the putting to death the two, under such circumstances, required the excuse of a divine thrusting on as much as the more accidental homicide of Polonius.

Horatio. So, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to 't.

Hamlet. Why, man, they did make love to this employment. They are not near my conscience.

Hamlet seems to understand, from the observation of Horatio, that the ends to which he had been shaped were not quite satisfactory. Isolated, the observation on Providence is a fine one; but when we know what Shakspere's opinions of a superintending divinity must have been, and compare this exceptional expression of it with the context, we think its introduction far from reverential.

Hamlet and Horatio, before the fencing match, thus discourse:—

Horatio. You will lose this wager, my lord.

Hamlet. I do not think so. Since he went into France, I have been in continual practice; I shall win at the odds. But thou would'st not think how ill all's here about my heart. But it is no matter.

Hor. Nay, good, my lord.

Ham. It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would, perhaps, trouble a woman.

Hor. If your mind dislike anything, obey: I will forestal their repair hither, and say you are not fit.

Ham. Not a whit, we defy augury; there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all. Since no man knows aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes?

Here we have Hamlet's, and, no doubt, Shakspere's, opinion of such presentiments, that they are foolish, weak, and womanish. Had he not ascribed to a presentiment given him by Providence the defeats of the previous attempts on his life? The more religious Horatio, says he should 'obey' such forewarnings, such dislikes of the mind, and proposes to put off the meeting. First, Hamlet defies what Horatio feels to have something of Providence in it. He then alludes to it kindly and playfully, as he has been accustomed to do, but in satire to the sentiments of Horatio. He intro-

duces Providence again for the third time, reminds Horatio that if, according to him, there is a Providence, a warning Providence, there is a Providence in the end itself. He then, in his usual half serious, half comic style, with a play upon words, treats of when the end is to be. If the reader wishes to see the difference of manner in Shakspere when he wishes to be serious, and when sarcastic, he may turn to the same sentiment which he has transferred to Julius Cæsar on the same occasion, when augury tells Cæsar something fatal would result to him from going to the Capitol

Hamlet's speech is rather 'wild and hurling.' Cæsar speaks but of one subject, and that not to be mistaken. Cæsar had no fear of death, or dread of after-death, at the thought of both of which Hamlet's heart had given way. The prince, therefore, re-assures himself in a tone of hilarity, it must be, he is ready for it, as far as his feelings go, and comforts himself with the reflection, that there are many people who had better die sooner than they liked, than later, if they knew when it was best for them to quit the world. He states himself ready, not for a future state, but to encounter death. He seems quite to have forgotten, that in leaving the world before executing vengeance on his uncle, he will not be acting consistently or conformably with his own precepts.

Though Hamlet and Pecksniff are different characters, yet Dickens is an instance, as well as Shakspere, of the way in which a special Providence, in the fall of a sparrow, is put in the mouth of a character, and ironically treated as a question of philosophy.* If Hamlet were touched with

* 'It would sadly pinch and cramp me, my dear friend,' repeated Mr. Pecksniff, 'but Providence—perhaps I may be permitted to say a special Providence has blessed my endeavours.' A question of philosophy arises here, whether Mr. Pecksniff had or had not good reason to say, that he was specially patronised and encouraged in his undertakings. All his life long he had been walking up and down the narrow ways and by-places, with a hook in one hand and a crook in the other, scraping all sorts of odds and ends into his pouch. Now, there being a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow, it follows (so Mr. Pecksniff might have reasoned



insanity, or only feigning madness, still Shakspere has represented that as a superstitious state, and, therefore, it would be compatible with character, though not with the infidelity of character given him, that he should sometimes entertain the idea that he was guided by Providence, particularly as he was under the spiritual and supernatural influence of the ghost. But there never is seriously such a sentiment put into Hamlet's mouth. Johnson accuses Hamlet of falsehood in his reconciliation with Laertes before fencing. But was not the seeming and the intention of Laertes much more worthy of moral condemnation?

Hamlet does not commit his soul to heaven; he gives no sign in dying of believing in a future state, nor in any religion; nor does Laertes: even the religious Horatio would rather on this occasion be a heathen than a Christian—commit suicide and forfeit salvation. Hamlet does not tell him the Almighty has fixed his canon against self-slaughter, commands him not as a Christian but as a man, that he should remain behind to justify his actions to the world, asking, as a favour, that he will for that purpose endure for a while a painful life, and absent himself from the felicity of death.

Absent thee from felicity a-while.

The not 'to be,' the 'consummation devoutly to be wished,' the abstraction from the pains of life, and the continued belief in the harshness of this world which made up so many of the speeches of Hamlet, seems to be the pervading sentiment of his dying hour. There is no thought in either of these two friends of their meeting again, any more than there is between the lovers Romeo and Juliet. From what we can judge, therefore, of these two characters, from their entrance to their exit, we must suppose that Hamlet uttered the word felicity to be applied as Horatio liked, and that to the prince himself it contained a very different sense to any which a religious man might put upon it. The last words of Hamlet are—'all the rest is silence.' These words convey much

perhaps) that there must also be a special Providence in the alighting of the stone, or stick, or other substance which is aimed at the sparrow, &c.—*Martin Chuzzlewit.*

meaning in the mouth of Hamlet. We think they are intended to express, that after all his speculations as to man —of the future we know nothing. Isis was said sometimes to have been represented with her finger on her lips, signifying her silence to all supernatural inquiries. This answers to the inscription under some of her statues. 'I am all that has been, that shall be, and none among mortals has hitherto taken off my veil.' The figure in form, would express the figure in the speech of Hamlet. Shakspere even ceases to make Horatio consistent; and after preferring the Roman to the Christian, he wishes the dead Hamlet a good night, though he does add, in a contrary sense, 'flights of angels sing thee to thy rest,' as a return to the propriety of his religious character. Fortinbras comes in to give the usual conclusion of Shakspere, and negative all hope of any resurrection from the dead..

O proud death!
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell.

The religious Horatio is made to class and generalise all events together as under the empire of chance. Thus, he says, he will tell the story committed to him by Hamlet; thus he points the moral to the tale, and thus affords the key to the play.

Give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view,
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world,
How these things came about. So shall you hear
Of cruel, bloody, and unnatural acts;
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters;
Of deaths put on by cunning, and forc'd cause;
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on th' inventors' heads. All this can I
Truly deliver.

* * * * *

But let this same be presently perform'd,
Even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance
On plots and errors happen.

The conclusions to which we have come respecting Hamlet's irreligion, will be startling to many readers—but let the answer on the new reading presented, be given conscientiously

on the evidence advanced, and we have no fear of the result. We may use words of one of Shakspere's recent critics. 'Has the world yet learned to understand Hamlet? Is there more than one in a thousand of those who settle as readily, and as self-satisfiedly, their opinions of his intellectual constitution, as they would tell the order of the first three letters of the alphabet? Is there more than one of such thousand, whose acquaintance with the currents, causes, and effects of Hamlet's thoughts and actions, is not as limited as their knowledge of the states of the markets in Georgium Sidus. Think it over.'*

We first read the plays of Shakspere, without note or comment, and formed the opinions of them which are given in these pages. Subsequently on reading those who have written on Shakspere, we found the opinion of his irreligion to be all but universal. To our surprise, we found that Schlegel, who does not make the same objections to any other of Shakspere's plays, as a religious man, finds fault with Hamlet for being a sceptic. The Germans examine into these matters, and come to the same conclusion as to Hamlet, that the French appear to have done from their appreciation of the character. Schlegel says:—'Hamlet is single in its kind: a tragedy of thought, inspired by continual and never satisfied meditation on human destiny and the dark perplexity of the events of this world, and calculated to call forth the very same meditation in the minds of the spectators.'—'Respecting Hamlet's character, I cannot, according to the views of the poet, as I understand them, pronounce altogether so favourable a sentence as Goethe's. Hamlet has no firm belief either in himself or in anything else: from expressions of religious confidence he passes over to sceptical doubts; he believes in the ghost of his father when he sees it, and as soon as it has disappeared, it appears to him almost in the light of deception. It has been censured as a contradiction, that Hamlet in the soliloquy on self-murder, should say:—

> The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
> No traveller returns.

* Remains of the late C. R. Pemberton, p. 40.

For was not the ghost a returned traveller? Shakspere, however, purposely wished to show, that Hamlet could not fix himself in any conviction of any kind whatever. He has even got so far as to say, "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." The poet loses himself with him in the labyrinths of thought, in which we find neither end nor beginning. The stars themselves, from the course of events, afford no answer to the question so urgently proposed to them. A voice, commissioned, as it would appear, by heaven from another world, demands vengeance for a monstrous enormity, and the demand remains without effect; the criminals are at last punished, but, as it were, by an accidental blow, and not in a manner requisite to announce, with solemnity, a warning example of justice to the world; irresolute foresight, cunning treachery, and impetuous rage, are hurried on to the same destruction; the less guilty or the innocent, are equally involved in the general destruction. The destiny of humanity is there exhibited as a gigantic sphinx, which threatens to precipitate whoever is unable to solve her dreadful enigma into the abyss of scepticism.' Hamlet's reflections on the grave of Ophelia we mentioned as similar to those which Sir James Mackintosh says proceed from surgeons and chemists against the doctrine of immortality. We have met with an essay by a surgeon on the same scene, who sees in it this very materialism:—' The melancholy of Hamlet in this scene partakes of a high contemplative cast, and excites no small degree of interest, when we see him directing Horatio to the consideration of those changes which organic matter undergoes when deprived of its mortality. Who can refrain from extolling the liveliness of Shakspere's imagination, when he makes Hamlet trace the noble dust of Alexander to the stopping of a beer barrel? Following out the same idea, the prince exclaims:—

> 'Imperial Cæsar, dead, and turned to clay,
> Now stops a hole to keep the wind away.

'The knowledge of the poet upon this subject embraces that which was clearly well known to the ancients; the changes of matter forming the basis of those principles of philosophy so well illustrated by the doctrines of Pythagoras.

In the days of Shakspere, speculations of this nature were little known or understood amongst his contemporaries, being confined to the genius of men, like the illustrious Bacon. Horatio, a scholar and a gentleman, says, when Hamlet is alluding to the dust of Alexander:—

'Twere to consider too curiously to consider so.

'The science of modern times has, however, established those principles; and had the poet conveyed his ideas in a philosophic dissertation, in place of a dramatic composition, the language he would have used, in all probability, would have been of that character which marks the philosophy of the present day, for Hamlet's observations, upon this occasion, amount to the same import which the following passage implies:—"Matter is eternal! the molecules of the body merely pass from one into another; they survive the destruction, or rather the dissolution, of organic and inorganic beings, when the former, ceasing to live, restore to the inexhaustible fund of nature those elements which she lends, without ever parting with them."'*

We may remark, that Hamlet would probably please Goethe, whose scepticism is suspected, from congeniality of sentiment. Yet Faust, the only poem we have read of Goethe's, except where it treats sacred subjects with Shaksperian irony, is a much more religious composition than any of Shakspere's plays.

Would not Shakspere's conclusions as to morality, in the saying of Hamlet quoted by the German critic, make the poet a precursor of Hobbes in philosophy, as well as Bacon in science?

* An Essay on the Tragedy of Hamlet, by P. Macdonnel, late President of the Royal Physical Society of Edinburgh.

KING RICHARD II.

THE king, according to the accounts of historians produced by Knight, had a character for credulity. Shakspere has made him deeply religious, full of faith and relying on Scripture promises here and hereafter, until finding the issue of events contrary to his expectations, he is rendered sceptical of Providence and a future state. By some of the critics, Richard II. is said to be the revisal by Shakspere of another play of the same name. Some part of it is said to be taken from Hollingshed; a portion of character and expressions might therefore be assigned to other authority than Shakspere. It is our opinion, Shakspere has painted in his own peculiar manner, an historical king, calculating theologically throughout his career: the colouring is put on thickly, and the surrounding personal objects give back reflections of religion, contrasted with the unalloyed materialism and scepticism of the author.

In reliance on the unseen, Richard has much firmer faith than Hamlet in the visible. His views, as Hamlet's, do not range through all the realms of inquiry; he is bound down to the more abstract and literal consideration of one subject, derived from orthodox sources of divinity; and we see in him the reality of religion reduced to the abyss of scepticism. Shakspere made Henry VI. an innocent; and Johnson says, 'He gives him (Richard) only passive fortitude, the virtue of a confessor rather than of a king.' The same critic says, 'in his distress he is wise, patient, and pious.' Shakspere has given variety to the character in its course, and has distributed it into many parts. In one period of transition, according to the views of religion, and judging by the character without reference to the writer, Richard may

have been as Johnson describes; but surely towards the catastrophe of his distress, religiously and humanly speaking, he forfeited these epithets.

It is in this play Knight makes the acknowledgment of having acquiesced in the change of the word God to Heaven. It appears, the substitution first took place in the folio edition of 1623, when Shakspere had been dead seven years. During his lifetime, therefore, the statute of James forbidding the use of these religious appeals, and public opinion, were equally disregarded. It was only twenty years afterwards that by authority of his editors, and not of the author, other terms were introduced to cloak the irreligion. Here is a decision of irreverence recorded against Shakspere. Knight lays the blame on the modern editors for having returned to the words of the original edition: he accuses them of want of taste and reverence, and excuses Shakspere by the sanction of society, in 'the light employment of the sacred name.' But Shakspere 'cried out at the top of the question,' according to Gifford, and did not regard the inhibitions of society. There is also a light employment of the facts and words of Scripture, as well as the mere appeal to Providence; and the introduction of Providence on slight occasions, is as derogatory to it, as the mere verbal mention of it in conversation. In writing on the martyrdom of Charles I., divines have been accused of blasphemy for comparing him to Jesus. It is impossible to read Hume without being reminded of a sort of parallel which runs between the last sufferings of the royal martyr and the stages of persecution endured by the Saviour of the world. That Shakspere had the contrast in his mind is the more probable, as he does not hesitate to put in the mouth of Richard the words of Jesus, relating to the struggles of the latter part of his life, and the concluding scepticism of Richard, in his extremities, when he had death before him, resembles the enigmatical appeal of the son of man and of God to his Father in heaven. Shakpere, from the consideration of the past in sacred history, and 'of the age and body of his own times,' in his delineation of character, has been able to make a prophetical satire of events, persons and circumstances immediately succeeding himself. Richard II. may be regarded as an anticipatory

history of the life and times of Charles I. Not only is Richard II. imperious and oppressive in prosperity, and full of piety and trust in Providence during his fall, like Charles I., but another Cromwell is exhibited in Bolingbroke.

Bolingbroke is portrayed as in Henry IV.—always full of pious expressions, oaths, and perjuries; the commission of sins and the promise of atonement; the doing through others what he was afraid to do himself—always regardless of religion, and ever pushing towards his own ends. The usurper is a religious contrast to Richard. We do not believe Shakspere drew these two pictures of piety any more than other religious characters in a spirit favourable to religion. 'God,' 'heaven,' 'soul,' the 'Saviour,' and the 'Holy Land,' are ridiculous in Bolingbroke's mouth.

In act the first, scene the second, Gaunt and the Duchess of Gloster have a conversation on the murder of his brother and her husband, the Duke of Gloster, where religion is largely introduced, and strangely applied.

> But since correction lieth in those hands
> Which made the fault that we cannot correct,
> Put we our quarrel to the will of heaven;
> Who, when he sees the hours ripe on earth,
> Will rain hot vengeance on offenders' heads.

The Duchess preaches human vengeance:—

> That which in mean men we entitle patience,
> Is pale cold cowardice in noble breasts.

An opinion of the Christian virtue of forbearance under injuries which Shakspere often utters, and which he has made another female in this play more strongly repeat.

In the spirit of his former speech, Gaunt replies again and again in most stubborn, accusatory, and, apparently, sarcastic language, that God is the cause of evil, that he (Gaunt) is not going to correct his errors, or take up his quarrels, and that she (the Duchess) must look to him for the punishment of his instruments.

> *Gaunt.* Heaven's is the quarrel; for heaven's substitute,
> His deputy anointed in his sight,
> Hath caus'd his death; the which if wrongfully,
> Let heaven revenge, for I may never lift
> An angry arm against his minister.

Duchess. Where then, alas! may I complain myself?

Gaunt. To heaven, the widow's champion and defence.

She says she will, and wishes every misfortune to befall one of her enemies, Mowbray, in a coming encounter with Bolingbroke.

On hearing of the insurrection of Bolingbroke, Richard says (Act 3, scene 2):—

This earth shall have a feeling, and these stones
Prove armed soldiers, ere her native king
Should faulter under foul rebellion's arms.

Bishop. Fear not, my lord; that power that made you king,
Hath power to keep you king, in spite of all.

* * * *

Richard. Not all the water in the rough rude sea,
Can wash the balm from an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.
For every man that Bolingbroke hath press'd,
To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
Heaven for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
A glorious angel: then, if angels fight,
Weak men must fall; for heaven still guards the right.

It is not only the assurance which he vaunts in religion, and in which he is upheld by the bishop, that strikes us as intended to be contrasted with the fact of failure and consequent want of reliance on the words of God; but it is the apparent borrowing of the language of the Saviour under the same circumstances.

We think the reader will have in mind the coincidence of the Son of Man referring to the stones as capable of feeling for him if human creatures remained insensible. But the parallel is stronger in the declaration of the Saviour, that if he wanted armed assistance he could have legions of angels from his Father in heaven. Richard draws his comfort and his hatred of his enemies from expressions in Scripture. He calls those whom he suspects to be traitors, vipers, damned without redemption; snakes, three Judasses, each one thrice worse than Judas, and tells hell to make war upon their souls. When hope abandons him, he has no religion, but the material philosophy of Shakspere.

Aumerle. Where is the duke my father, with his power?
K. Richard. No matter where. Of comfort no man speak;
Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs.

* * * * *

Nothing can we call our own, but death;
And that small model of the barren earth,
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.

He then, in the rest of a long speech, as Hamlet does, speaks of death as common to kings, who are flattered by their state into a belief of life less mortal than their subjects. There is no thought of divine assistance in extremity, no religious consolation, or expression of hope, beyond the grave.

When confronted with his enemies, he assumes a tone of bitterness and irony, and appeals to religion in threats and prophetic denunciations. On seeing no signs in Northumberland of the reverence due from a subject to a king, he says:—

We thought ourself thy lawful king:
If we be not, show us the hand of God,
That hath dismiss'd us from our stewardship.
For well we know no hand of blood and bone
Can gripe the sacred handle of our sceptre,
Unless he do profane, steal, or usurp.
And though you think, that all, as you have done,
Have torn their souls, by turning them from us,
And we are barren, and bereft of friends;
Yet know,—my master, God omnipotent,
Is must'ring in his clouds on our behalf,
Armies of pestilence; and they shall strike
Your children yet unborn and unbegot,
That lift your vassal hands against my head,
And threat the glory of my precious crown.

The individual under suffering, as usual, is made to look to heaven only for vengeance, which Shakspere could safely make him prophecy in the civil wars to come. The consequences on future generations which he foretells will succeed from his deposition, also resemble those which Jesus prophecied would ensue from his rejection and death by the Jews. When subjected to the humiliation of having to forgive and reward his enemies, he appeals to God and them for 'a little grave in exchange for his kingdom.' No



thought is there introduced of a future kingdom. The queen, who gives proof of not having the sometimes Christian disposition of her husband, on hearing from her gardener the intelligence of Richard's fall, makes a strange application of Scripture to her circumstances:—

> Oh! I am press'd to death through want of speaking!
> Thou old Adam's likeness, sent to dress this garden,
> How dares thy harsh-rude tongue sound this unpleasant news?
> What Eve, what serpent hath suggested thee,
> To make a second fall of cursed man?

The bishop, who figures among the churchmen in this piece in no very creditable manner, gives the following account of the death of Norfolk, Bolingbroke's rival; and Bolingbroke's reply to the piety is hypocritical in the character, satirical in the author. It is one of the jests given to Richard III. and Falstaff. The bishop says (Act 4, scene 1) he has given—

> His pure soul unto his captain Christ,
> Under whose colours he had fought so long.
> *Bolingbroke.* Why, bishop, is Norfolk dead?
> *Carlisle.* Sure as I live, my lord.
> *Boling.* Sweet peace conduct his sweet soul to the bosom
> Of good old Abraham!

The king, when called upon to resign his crown, is made not only to compare himself to Jesus, but describe his condition as worse in his betrayal:—

> Did they not sometime cry, all hail! to me?
> So Judas did to Christ; but he, in twelve,
> Found truth in all, but one; I, in twelve thousand, none.

Bolingbroke, when he pronounced judgment of death upon those opposed to him, used the very words of Pilate, even saying, that he washed his hands of their blood — and Richard, as Jesus, apostrophises all his enemies as Pilates:—

> Nay, all of you, that stand and look upon me,
> Whilst that my wretchedness doth bait myself,
> Though some of you with Pilate wash your hands,
> Showing an outward pity; yet you Pilates
> Have here delivered me to my sour cross,
> And water cannot wash away your sin.

The Bishop of Carlisle, the Abbot of Westminster, and Aumerle, remain behind after the scene of Richard's deposition.

Aumerle. You holy clergymen, is there no plot
To rid the realm of this pernicious blot?

Abbot. Before I freely speak my mind herein,
You shall not only take the sacrament
To bury mine intents, but to effect
Whatever I shall happen to devise:—
I see your brows are full of discontent,
Your hearts of sorrow, and your eyes of tears;
Come home with me to supper; and I'll lay
A plot shall shew us all a merry day.

The abbot is made to be one of those 'cautelous priests,' as Shakspere calls those who would have men bound by the imposition of oaths and religious obligations to be true to their intentions; and the one of Westminster has the sacrament administered beforehand as a sanction to whatever he shall propose, which is nothing else than the assassination of Bolingbroke. Equally Shaksperian, and uncharacteristic of the holy clergyman, is the delivery from his mouth of the effects which the plot is to produce. On the discovery of the conspiracy to the king ordered to be executed, his sudden death supposes his suicide.

The king says to the queen:—

I am sworn brother, sweet,
To grim necessity; and he and I
Will keep a league till death. Hie thee to France,
And cloister thee in some religious house:
Our holy lives must win a new world's crown,
Which our profane hours here have stricken down.

Queen. What, is my Richard both in shape and mind
Transform'd and weaken'd? Hath Bolingbroke
Depos'd thine intellect? hath he been in thy heart?
The lion, dying, thrusting forth his paw,
And wounds the earth, if nothing else, with rage
To be o'erpower'd; and wilt thou, pupil-like,
Take thy correction mildly? kiss the rod;
And fawn on rage with base humility,
Which art a lion, and a king of beasts?

The king utters a sentiment of real piety, which has been admired as the last words and interchange of ideas between

Charles I. and Bishop Juxon, on the execution of the king. Not much importance is to be attached to what Shakspere says for the purposes of rhyme, as some ascribe it to the work of others; and Johnson gives an instance of the sacrifice of sense to it. We have only to observe, that the manner does not generally betoken much reverence for the matter. Here the sentiment affords occasion for irreligious comment, given in a more serious spirit. The queen concludes in the oft repeated language of Shakspere, contemptuous of Christian humility, and urging him to die revenging, not patient or pious. When the king charges Northumberland with his cruelty and impiety in separating them, Northumberland is made to answer as the Jews did:—

My guilt be on my head.

As Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, in the commencement, gave Providence the credit of everything bad, and spoke in such double dealing language of religion, so York, his brother, plays the same part at the fall of Richard. His duchess also shares with the other two female characters the attributes of the man; whilst the meekness of the woman, and the semblance of religious humility, are given to the male character. York gives a pathetic description of Richard on his entry into London:—

> That had not God, for some strong purpose, steel'd
> The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted,
> And barbarism itself have pitied him.
> But heaven hath a hand in these events,
> To whose high will we bound our calm contents.
> To Bolingbroke are we sworn subjects now,
> Whose state and honour I for aye allow.

York had gone over to Bolingbroke when he saw him the strongest. He excuses the want of pity and defence of the right in himself and others, charging it on God. The divine will is used as an argument by laity and clergy in support of Richard, and is now made a plea in favour of usurpation and revolt, and God represented as worse than man would be left to himself.

Infidels have made triumphant appeals to the contradictions in Scripture. Shakspere points them out in the words

of Jesus. In the hour of need, he would show the words as well as the works of Providence wanting, particularly as to any certainty or comfort to be derived from them, when under the expectation of death. King Richard, in the dungeon of Pomfret Castle, immediately before his executioners consign him to death, says (Act 4, scene 1):—

> My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,
> My soul the father; and these two beget
> A generation of still-breeding thoughts;
> And these same thoughts people this little world;
> In humour like the people of this world,
> For no thought is contented. The better sort,
> As thoughts of things divine, are intermix'd
> With scruples, and do set the word itself
> Against the word; as thus: Come, little ones; and then again,
> *It is as hard to come, as for a camel*
> *To thread the postern of a needle's eye.*

Here we have quotation set against quotation, as in works written professedly against Christianity, down to the times of Strauss. Shakspere and his plays preceded them in the work of demolition so satisfactory to sceptics. Shakspere here makes the contradiction an argument for his favourite opinion, that there is nothing after death. Richard ends his soliloquy thus:—

> But whate'er I am,
> Nor I, nor any man, that but man is,
> With nothing shall be pleas'd, till he be eas'd
> With being nothing.

Knight says of the king's comparison between this little world of man and the external world, (the 'little world' of man, as in Lear) 'Shakspere here uses the philosophy which is described by Raleigh: "Because in the little frame of man's body there is a representation of the universe, and (by allusion) a kind of participation of all the parts there, therefore was man called microcosmos, or the little world."' This looks very much like pantheism. Raleigh was said to be an atheist. The history of the world, whence the extract was taken, was a book in the possession of Shakspere. He may have heard the remark from Raleigh, as Richard II. preceded the History of the World.

Shakspere thus having made Richard philosophise against



Christianity, he makes him die contrary to the precepts of Christianity, and cast off all resignation to the will of Providence, both in words and deed:—

K. Richard. The devil take Henry of Lancaster and thee!
Patience is stale, and I am weary of it!

[*Beats the keeper.*

Keeper. Help! help! help!

Upon the entry of Exton and servants, armed:—

K. Richard. How now, what means death in this rude assault?
Villain, thine own hand yields thy death's instrument;

[*Snatching a sword and killing one.*

Go thou, and fill another room in hell.

[*Kills another, then Exton strikes him down.*

That hand shall burn in never-quenching fire,
That staggers thus my person. Exton, thy fierce hand
Hath with the king's blood stain'd the king's own land.
Mount, mount, my soul! thy seat is up on high;
Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die.

In language and in action he refutes Johnson, discards patience, and, rather than die a martyr, kills two men, apparently before aware of their intentions. Though humanely we feel with him, we cannot but perceive a difference from his former conduct, eulogised by Johnson. We see developed to the conclusion the workings of Shakspere's mind in theory and practice. However, the advocates of Shakspere's piety have the reverential inference they wish to draw, from the last rhyme at the end of Richard II.



RICHARD III.

If, in the order of Shakspere's plays, Richard II. was followed by Richard III., as, in the order of history, Henry VI. is followed by Richard III., Shakspere went to the direct antipodes in character, and in the hunchbacked tyrant seems to have indulged in a satire on the sanctity of the preceding kings. Hamlet and Richard, both tragic characters, though very different in other respects, often agree in their comic spirit of treating serious subjects. We cannot know how Hamlet was originally treated on the stage, but it is a fact, that Richard was long handed down on the boards as a comic character. There is much of a similar kind in the Danish prince, which makes it the less improbable, that more comedy than at present formed part of its proper representation.

Hume, in his History of England, has spoken of Cromwell as a buffoon. But we affix to the idea of such a character no sentiment of reverence. There can be no doubt, however, that the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth was sincere in his religious belief, and, therefore, in that particular, we cannot suspect him of playing the buffoon. Richard, on the other hand, we consider a buffoon, because an avowed hypocrite, who ridicules religion in his soliloquies, and whose religious speeches, if they were meant to appear as disguises of his intentions amongst the characters of the drama, must certainly have appeared in their true light to the audience of the stage, who knew how little the truth corresponded with his affectation of piety. Richard III. was an historical character, which did not present any necessity to paint him such a transparent hypocrite. This sort of hypocrisy in religion is considered, in the case of Hume, the most disgusting irony and satire. Therefore, when Shak-



spere made the staple of Richard's character, such as he found no warrant for in history, he was actuated by the same influences as other unbelievers who have done likewise under the same circumstances—enmity to religion, tempered by a sense of discretion. We think we can see the natural morality of Shakspere developed in this play as in others—that vice kills vice, mutual destruction ensues, immorality, therefore, stops, because the world cannot go on: without morality existence would stop. We see here the example drawn from history, the theory of which is beautifully delivered in a speech of Macbeth. There is another feature of natural morality which is displayed in Richard III., and still more developed in Timon. The opposite of the principle is given in Richard—the principle and its contrary exposed in Timon. The pure feeling, uncounteracted by adverse circumstances, in Prospero, Miranda, Marina, Dogberry, Posthumus's gaoler, has such evidence of genuineness in the author, that we cannot refuse to Shakspere the attribute of deep benevolence. This principle we are speaking of is a natural love inherent in mankind, which preponderates over the other passions. This is a physical truth, for humanity, in its sound state, bears love to its fellow-creatures, whilst in a disordered and unnatural condition it feels nothing but hatred. Thus one of the great symptoms of insanity is suspicion and dislike of its fellows, and whether provoked by real injuries, or the mere creature of imagination, often declares itself in open madness. Timon, eccentric in his love of his fellow-creatures, his reason upset by a want of gratitude, becomes mad in his hatred of human nature.

Towards the conclusion of Henry VI., Shakspere had laid the foundation of Richard's future character. In the opening soliloquy of the play, he makes Richard III. return to the same sentiments. His moral feelings, under the influence of adverse circumstances and physical defects, are displayed. Nature has made him so that the very dogs bark at him, and as he cannot prove a lover, he will a villain. He concludes his speech by unfolding the satirical, hypocritical part he means to play through his coming career, the profit to himself, and the amusement to his audience, by practising on the proneness of mankind to religion :—

> Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
> By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,
> To set my brother Clarence and the king
> In deadly hate the one against the other.

King Edward, in the growing piety of his heart, lent a willing ear to prophecies. Upon this sentiment Gloster preys. Clarence, because his name was George, and therefore bore the initial G, (which a wizard of Gloster's providing had predicted to the king was the fatal G of the murderer of Edward's heirs) is committed to the tower. Thus the king's religion is made to become the instrument of injustice. Gloster says to Clarence, as he passes on his way to the tower, alluding to his name of George:—

> Alack, my lord, that fault is not of yours;
> He should for that commit your godfathers:—
> O belike his majesty hath some intent
> That you should be new-christen'd in the Tower.
> But what's the matter, Clarence? may I know?

But Clarence evinces little more reverence than Richard for prophecies. Alluding to the one just mentioned, he says—

> Such like *toys* as these,
> Have mov'd his highness to commit me now.

Clarence gone, Gloster announces his intention of having him put to death, with the irony which Shakspere makes always to accompany his murderous designs:—

> Go, tread the path that thou shalt ne'er return:
> Simple, plain Clarence! I do love thee so,
> That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven,
> If heaven will take the present at our hands.

Now, what necessity was there for this enlarged mockery of the immortality of the soul, even if necessary that Gloster should show what sport he made of fratricide? If Byron had put the same sentiment in the mouth of Cain, when he was going to kill Abel, what would not have been said about his 'blasphemy?' But sending souls to heaven, or hell, on all sorts of errands, was the favourite pastime of Shakspere.

We cannot see the difference between the irreligious levity of Richard, and the cool denunciations of Hamlet and Iden, speaking of a future state, which religious critics have

thought so horrible. The distinction Johnson drew, was, that he thought the one seriously meant, and the other he knew not to be intended; but he might have perceived that they both partook of the disbelief of the author, and were both entitled to the same condemnation. In Hamlet, it was as much a cruel jest, with a variation, as in Richard; only the one was provoked, the other was totally without a justifiable cause. Johnson thought the sentiment unsuitable to character in Hamlet, because 'virtuous,' though not to Shakspere's representation of Richard—yet generally to the good he has given impiety, to the wicked, religion. So that on the subject of religion, Shakspere does not give dialogue suitable to character.

Gloster soon repeats his jest on George, and adds to it his brother the king, when he hears of his illness:—

> He cannot live, I hope; and must not die,
> Till George be pack'd with post horse up to heaven,
> Which done, God take king Edward to his mercy,
> And leave the world for me to bustle in!

Anne refuses the courtship of Richard, who says:—

> Sweet saint, for charity, be not so curst.

She calls upon God to revenge the death of Henry:—

> *Gloster.* Lady, you know no rules of charity,
> Which renders good for bad, blessings for curses.

On such an occasion, in such a mouth, and for such a purpose—to win a lady mourning over the corpse of her murdered father-in-law, Henry VI., himself the murderer both of father-in-law and of her husband, Prince Henry—the impropriety of such language, which satirises forgiveness of injuries, is evident.

Richard continues the same indecent badinage of love and religion. He grants he did kill the king:—

> *Anne.* Dost grant me, hedgehog? then God grant me too,
> Thou mayst be damned for that wicked deed!
> O, he was gentle, mild, and virtuous.
> *Glo.* The fitter for the king of heaven, that hath him.
> *Anne.* He is in heaven, where thou shalt never come.
> *Glo.* Let him thank me, that holp to send him thither;
> For he was fitter for that place than earth.

Anne. And thou unfit for any place but hell.
Glo. Yes, one place else, if you will hear me name it.
Anne. Some dungeon.
Glo. Your bedchamber.

Here is the immediate double repetition of the standard joke on the Almighty and a future state. The end of his suit sounds equivocally of sacred and profane:—

Glo. Say then my peace is made.
Anne. That shalt thou know hereafter.
Glo. But shall I live in hope?
Anne. All men, I hope, live so.

Shakspere not only would seem to make light of women and their resolves, but of the effect of religion upon them. Having every inducement to the contrary, and joining her cause with God in enmity to Gloster, yet she yields to his suit. Gloster speaks with astonishment of his success:—

Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me.

And he puts in opposition to these, with a laugh—

The plain devil,

himself. Queen Elizabeth says what the language of Richard was with regard to herself—'bitter scoffs.' Gloster says of Clarence:—

Poor Clarence did forsake his father Warwick;
Ay, and forswore himself,—which Jesu pardon!
Q. Mar. Which God revenge!——

He tells Queen Margaret that all her misfortunes are owing to the curses of her father, York, falling upon her, for having put to death him and his little son, Rutland; and it was not those whom she abused, but God, who 'plagued the bloody deed.'

Queen Elizabeth. So just is God, to right the innocent.

Queen Margaret, in reply, tauntingly asks if the curses of York prevailed so much with heaven, that they could only be answered by the murder of her husband and son, the loss of kingdom and banishment? Then directing her irony more especially to heaven and the idea of Providence, she says:—

> Can curses pierce the clouds, and enter heaven?
> Why, then give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses!

After venting all her curses on Richard's greatness, she thus speaks of her son, killed by him:—

> Witness my son, now in the shade of death;
> Whose bright out-shining beams thy cloudy wrath
> Hath in eternal darkness folded up.
> Your aiery buildeth in our aiery's nest.
> O God, that seest it, do not suffer it;
> As it was won with blood, lost be it so.
>
> *Buckingham.* Peace, peace, for shame, if not for charity.

All, on their own side, made out that God only executed their vengeance, in listening to their curses. Buckingham says, in answer to those of Margaret:—

> Curses never pass
> The lips of those that breathe them in the air.
>
> *Queen Mar.* I'll not believe but they ascend the sky,
> And there awake God's gentle-sleeping peace.

Thus they who pretend to believe in a Providence, in their turn disbelieve it; and she, who scoffed at the idea when it was called to witness in their favour, believes it when they assert their disbelief to escape its consequences. But what else does such a dialogue convey but doubt and contempt of its interference—a satire upon its supposed operations, alternately accepted and rejected, and chiefly proclaimed by a religious buffoon, Richard. The issue of all which would seem to point out that Providence cared not to prevent, could only second, the effusion of blood; and in that all his power lay. Gloucester swears by God's holy mother, that he repents of the wrong he did her, and not being able to keep the serious, says:—

> Marry, as for Clarence, he is well repaid;
> He is frank'd up to fatting for his pains;
> God pardon them that are the cause thereof!
>
> *Rivers.* A virtuous and a christian-like conclusion,
> To pray for them that have done scath to us.
>
> *Glo.* So do I ever, being well advis'd;
> For had I curs'd now, I had curs'd myself.

Meaning that he was the cause of Clarence's present circum-

stances. Thus they all treat their crimes with the same strain of levity; turning to ridicule the scripture sentiments which reflect upon their bad actions. He says of the rival parties who would whet him on to revenge:—

> But then I sigh, and with a piece of scripture,
> Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:
> And thus I clothe my naked villainy
> With old odd ends stolen forth of holy writ,
> And seem a saint when most I play the devil.

Shakspere might have the idea, that those who affected Puritanism in his times, were playing the devil when they seemed the saint; but such a hypocrite as Richard could not delude, and could only have been intended as a gross satire to make an audience easily laugh.

Clarence is made to have a dream, and, in a speech to the keeper, gives Virgil's and Dante's account of the infernal regions. Those who do talk of the judgment day are his murderers, whom Shakspere makes religious, though at the expense of it, as they act immorally in spite of it. After speaking of remorse and damnation, the qualmish murderer yields to the thought of the reward, and delivers the sentiment of Paley with regard to conscience:—

> 2 *Villain.* 'Tis no matter, let it go; there's few or none will entertain it.
>
> 1 *Vil.* What if it come to thee again?

The answer is given in a long speech, treating conscience with the peculiar wit of Shakspere. He says, as Hamlet said of it, it makes a man 'a coward.' After recounting all the bad things it would prevent or punish—the good things it sometimes makes a man do, he ends:—

> It beggars any man that keeps it; It is turned out of towns and cities for a dangerous thing; and every man that means to live well, endeavours to trust to himself, and live without it.

On the murderers apprising Clarence of their intentions, he says:—

> I charge you as you hope to have redemption,
> That you depart, and lay no hands on me;
> The deed you undertake is damnable.

In the above appeal, alteration and omission have per-



formed their parts, according to the sense of propriety in the editor: 'any goodness' has been substituted for 'redemption,' and after it a line has been left out:—

By Christ's dear blood shed for our grievous sins.

Knight adopts the alteration in his text, and says—'It was properly omitted under the statute of James, as introducing the most sacred things unnecessarily into a work of imagination.' Here Knight performs the part of censor to Shakspere, and argues against his own opinion of him. There are other instances of this particular appeal made by characters of Shakspere; therefore, in all it must be equally condemned. The use of it by Isabel, in Measure for Measure, has been allowed, and is admired; though she pleaded for another's life, and Clarence for his own. But religion, in this play, was more suspicious than in any other, by the irony put upon it.

If introduced unnecessarily here, how much more unnecessarily where the same subjects are treated with levity, by serious and comic characters, as fitting jokes! Here, we say again, we should hardly have attacked Shakspere as irreligious in the introduction of this line, but should rather have thought it necessary to contend against it as evidence of religious sentiment, or as suitable to situation, had not the opinion of all time, from James to Knight, condemned it as irreligious. There was not so great a distance between the first and second, the quarto and folio editions of Shakspere's plays; so that it could not be said to be the age which sanctioned such writing: it was rather the contrary, as the event proved. It must have been the author's inclination which made him subscribe to the sentiments of his brother dramatists, and of the more learned minority about to disappear under an age of Puritanism. Once for all, then, we wish it to be observed, that wherever religion is introduced seriously, we have more or less the antecedent judgment of lawgivers and critics, that it is rather a mark of impiety, and want of faith, than religious belief.

In his next speech, Clarence mentions the great 'king of kings,' and quotes from the Old Testament against murder, and that God will execute vengeance against it. Shakspere

has a ready reply for the murderers—they are executing vengeance for God, on Clarence, and religion is their excuse. We shall see that Shakspere has given to the murderers, or, dramatically considered, that Richard has inoculated his instruments with his own especial joke on the killing of Christians. Clarence says that it cannot be true that they were sent by his brother Richard to destroy him, for that—

> He swore with sobs,
> That he would labour my delivery.
> 1 *Villain.* Why, so he doth, when he delivers you
> From this earth's thraldom to the joys of heaven.

The two murderers tell him to make his peace with God, for he must die. Then Clarence makes the inference Shakspere intended to be drawn by the audience—how incongruous that a man should recommend another to make peace with God, and yet care nothing for it himself, but should go to war with God. Washing blood out is a frequent idea of Shakspere's; and the example of Pilate, the origin of the idea, is often introduced.

> 2 *Villain.* How fain, like Pilate, would I wash my hands
> Of this most grievous guilty murther done!

The brutal, lascivious, and irreligious Edward, who said he cared not for an oath in comparison with a kingdom, now appears 'melancholy' and religious, and willing to make dependent upon an oath, the mutual forgiveness of his family and the promise of their assistance in establishing his son upon the throne. Surely the language which, although appropriate, was so lately deemed improper, must be considered much more so in the mouth of Edward; delivered not as a hope, but as a certainty. In royal and diplomatical language, it looks as if he thought his royal command had been sent to heaven to take him hence, or receive him there, and implies at once an intention in the author to ridicule the subject:—

> I every day expect an embassage
> From my Redeemer to redeem me hence.
> And now in peace my soul shall part to heaven,
> Since I have made my friends at peace on earth.

His God was to send an embassy to him! He was not to go on an embassage to God to seek favour and reconcilia-

tion! His Redeemer was to come on another mission to earth to fetch him. Can anything be more blasphemous than this?

They all take the oath to live at peace with one another, with a most shocking and disgusting contempt of all faith, meaning to break it immediately; but of course Gloster is made to speak with all the veneration of piety over his declaration. Was this necessary? and could a man do it if he did not mean to move laughter and excite ridicule? He says Edward has spent the day in a 'blessed labour,' making peace amongst his brethren, alluding to 'blessed are the peacemakers:' and he says of himself:—

> 'Tis death to me to be at enmity,
> I hate it, and desire all good men's love.
> I do not know that Englishman alive,
> With whom my soul is any jot at odds,
> More than the infant that is born to-night;
> I thank my God for my humility.

Edward calls a man being murdered—

> The precious image of our dear Redeemer.

And for the death of Clarence, says:—

> O God! I fear thy justice will take hold
> On me, and you, and mine, and yours, for this.

Religion is dragged in by Shakspere on every occasion; and when religion will not do, some popular superstition is introduced, as the cause which influenced Edward to have Clarence put to death.

The son of Clarence says, on the death of his father:—

> God will revenge it, whom I will importune
> With earnest prayers all to that effect.
> *Daughter.* And so will I.

'Innocents,' as the Duchess of York calls them, are thus made to treat a Providence, and thus to pray. The mother of Richard is made to know him, and she tells the children their uncle only pretended to pity them, and told them falsehoods. Queen Elizabeth talks of following Edward—

> To his new kingdom of ne'er-changing night.

Gloster, seeing his mother, says:—

Humbly on my knee
I crave your blessing.

Duchess. God bless thee, and put meekness in thy breast,
Love, charity, obedience, and true duty.

Glo. Amen; and make me die a good old man!
That is the butt-end of a mother's blessing;
I marvel that her grace did leave it out.

Shakspere makes the citizens talk religiously and superstitiously, which mixed together, is intended as no compliment to religion. He puts in the mouth of one the language of Scripture—

Truly the hearts of men are full of fear.

Another says such presentiments are 'divine instincts' of 'ensuing danger,' from the analogy of natural causes and effects, 'a swell before a storm.'

The prince, the eldest son of the late king Edward, remarking that if it were not registered that Julius Cæsar had built the Tower of London, truth would report the story, asks:—

What say you, uncle?

Glo. I say, without characters fame lives long.
Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity,
I moralise: two meanings in one word.

Vice was the buffoon of the moralities, the walking satire, or the devil which Richard played. The satire of Shakspere is estimated by the account he gives of it in the mouth of Richard. Shakspere kept up the character amongst his *dramatis personæ*, when ceasing to have a religious warrant, and legally suppressed by the influence of the reformation, it had a contrary tendency. A critic—the author of the Revisal of Shakspere—says: 'The indecencies which lie at the bottom are sheltered from exception—and the indignation they would excite, if nakedly delivered—under the ambiguity of a double meaning.'

A priest and his office are introduced to be the jest of the profligate Hastings, and the 'wit' of Buckingham.

Priest. Well met, my lord, I'm glad to see your honour.

Hastings. I thank thee, good Sir John, with all my heart.
I'm in your debt for your last exercise:
Come the next Sabbath, and I will content you.

Buck. What, talking with a priest, lord chamberlain?
Your friends at Pomfret they do need a priest,
Your honour hath no shriving work in hand.

Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan, are sent to execution. Rivers prays that the curses which Margaret had uttered may be fulfilled on Richard and their enemies, and courting favor of God by a term of endearment, demands exemption from them for their friends. They make sure amongst themselves of meeting again in heaven.

Shakspere, as the rest of the players, indulges in some irony on the lord mayor and citizens. To impose upon the description of citizens Shakspere has painted in this play, Richard tells Buckingham what to say in persuading them to offer him the crown, and adds:—

Gloster. If you thrive well, bring them to Baynard's castle,
Where you shall find me well accompanied
With reverend fathers and well-learned bishops.

Buckingham says, that though they spoke of his 'fair humility,' they had not succeeded; but the lord mayor was coming with the citizens:—

And look you get a prayer-book in your hand,
And stand between two churchmen; good my lord,
For on that ground I'll build a holy descant.

Shakspere must have thought the Puritans and religious people of his day thus easily won over by the appearance of piety, and the whole scene must have been intended to ridicule them. It is exaggerated, and the actors are made barefaced hypocrites. Still it is true to nature of the Puritans, and turned out almost prophetical when the really religious leader of a religious party, who, raised to the lord protectorship, went through this very scene in word and deed, in order to exchange that title for king. It was not attended with the same result, as Cromwell saw it would not be politic to take a crown which his followers were not quite such dupes as to be willing to give him. This would be quite a specimen of what Shakspere, in Henry IV., makes out prophecy to

be, the knowledge of future from preceding events. Julius Cæsar played much the same part.

Buckingham, with the lord mayor, citizens, &c., seeks admission :—

Buck. Catesby, what says your lord to my request?
Catesby. He doth entreat your grace, my noble lord,
To visit him to-morrow, or next day.
He is within, with two right reverend fathers,
Divinely bent to meditation,
And in no worldly suits would he be mov'd
To draw him from his holy exercise.

Buckingham the 'witty,' as Richard calls him, and who is a chorus of profanity to his master spirit, remarks to the mayor :—

Ah, ha! my lord, this prince is not an Edward;
He is not lulling on a lewd-love bed,
But on his knees at meditation;
Not dallying with a brace of courtezans,
But meditating with two deep divines;
Not sleeping to engross his idle body,
But praying to enrich his watchful soul.

On a second denial of Richard's presence, he says :—

When holy and devout religious men
Are at their beads, 'tis hard to draw them thence,
So sweet is zealous contemplation.

Gloster enters in a gallery above, between two bishops.

Mayor. See, where his grace stands 'tween two clergymen!
Buck. Two props of virtue for a Christian prince
To stay him from the fall of vanity:
And, see, a book of prayer in his hand;
True ornaments to know a holy man.
Famous Plantagenet, most gracious prince,
Lend favourable ear to our requests;
And pardon us the interruption
Of thy devotion, and right Christian zeal.
Glo. My lord, there needs no such apology;
I rather do beseech you pardon me,
Who, earnest in the service of my God,
Neglect the visitation of my friends.
But, leaving this, what is your grace's pleasure?
Buck. Even that, I hope, which pleaseth God above,
And all good men of this ungovern'd isle.

Glo. I do suspect, I have done some offence,
That seems disgracious in the city's eye;
And that you come to reprehend my ignorance.

Buck. You have, my lord; Would it might please your grace,
On our entreaties, to amend your fault!

Glo. Else wherefore breathe I in a Christian land?

Richard, after thanking God there is no need of him, and saying God defend that he should take the crown from the rightful owner, does comply with their request to be king against his conscience and his soul:—

For God doth know, and you may partly see,
How far I am from the desire of this.

Mayor. God bless your grace! we see it, and will say it.

Glo. In saying so, you shall but say the truth.

(To the Bishops.) Come, let us to our holy work again.

'Seeking the Lord,' as Cromwell used to say of himself on state occasions.

The murderer of the two princes in the tower gives Shakspere the usual occasion to give them some tincture of religion, without it acting as a check to the commission of crime. One of the murderers says:—

A book of prayers on their pillow lay,
Which once (quoth Forrest) almost chang'd my mind;
But, oh! the devil—there the villain stopp'd.

Richard makes a joke of Jesus's illustration of a future state:—

The sons of Edward sleep in Abraham's bosom;
And Anne my wife hath bid this world good night.

Queen Elizabeth, after the murder of her children, Queen Margaret and the Duchess of York, the mother of Richard, meet. Queen Elizabeth says of her sons:—

If yet your gentle souls fly in the air,
And be not fix'd in doom perpetual,
Hover about me with your airy wings,
And hear your mother's lamentations.

Q. Margaret. Hover about her; say that right for right
Hath dimm'd your infant-morn to aged night.

The mention of their future state by their mother is inter-

mixed with doubt and the phraseology of materialism. The remark of Queen Margaret is the addition of irony to it:—

> *Queen.* Wilt thou, O God, fly from such gentle lambs,
> And throw them in the entrails of the wolf?
> When didst thou sleep when such a deed was done?
>
> *Q. Margaret.* When holy Henry died, and my sweet son.

The mention of God is accompanied by the usual satire upon it in the mouth of Queen Elizabeth, and by renewed invective in that of Queen Margaret. Queen Margaret, however, thanks God for having revenged her on her enemies:—

> O upright, just, and true disposing God,
> How do I thank thee, that this carnal cur
> Preys on the issue of his mother's body,
> And makes her pew-fellow with other's moan!

As if resort was made to a pew in a church, to utter cries of anguish, to ask for vengeance on each other, and record their thanks for its receipt. She is still however 'hungry for revenge;' and as for Richard, she says:—

> Earth gapes, hell burns, fiends roar, saints pray,
> To have him suddenly conveyed from hence:
> Cancel his bond of life, dear God, I pray,
> That I may live to say, The dog is dead!

God is addressed for the purpose of revenge by the epithet commonly given him on such occasions by the characters of this play. It is at least unbecoming in such a cause, making the deity humour the mere creature of our distempered imagination.

Queen Elizabeth wishes to be taught by Margaret how to curse her enemies, and they proceed together on the mission of cursing Richard. On meeting them Richard says:—

> A flourish, trumpets!—strike alarum, drums!
> Let not the heaven hear these tell-tale women
> Rail on the Lord's anointed: Strike, I say.

Then with some mockery on his murder of the two princes, he bandies controversial divinity with their mother, and proposes love to her daughter.

Religion is put into the mouth of the queen objecting to



Richard as a husband for her daughter, and as much into the mouth of Richard, wooing her to win her daughter. In Richard's speech, there is an admixture of false when true religion is exhausted. All creeds are the same to him, and piety is shown to be powerless in her. When Richard swears by everything on earth and in heaven to the truth of his affection, conscious of the profanity, the folio changed the 'by God' of the quarto into 'by heavens.' A libel on women and religion, she is made to yield to his solicitations, and agree to the marriage as easily as Anne. Richard says on the eve of battle, as to where he shall lie to-morrow, 'all's one for that.' To Stanley he sends word to—

> Bring his power
> Before sun-rising, lest his son George fall
> Into the blind cave of eternal night.

Richmond's address to God, on the eve of battle, is more suitable to a god of war, to a Mars than a Christian deity, and implies as much belief in Shakspere as in Homer, when he gives an account of a god's exploits in a battle field.

> O thou whose captain I account myself,
> Look on my forces with a gracious eye;
> Put in their hands thy bruising irons of wrath,
> That they may crush down with a heavy fall
> The usurping helmets of our adversaries!
> Make us thy ministers of chastisement,
> That we may praise thee in thy victory.

In the epic, or the dramatist, such language stands for satire rather than praise, and suitable to savage idolators rather than to Christians. The same may be said of the introduction of ghosts—a creation of the poets—or employment of popular superstition; which, in the very way it is done, and the language put in their mouths, renders the idea more ridiculous than sublime. Shakspere always deals in mockery with supernatural machinery, whilst at the same time he employs moral truths strikingly, effectively, and profoundly. Richard did but 'dream,' as he says, his 'conscience' had made 'a coward' of him, brought up witnesses of his crimes, and forced a confession of guilt. In the end, wickedness has its own punishment; no longer buoyed up by the pursuit of successful villainy, Richard feels at last the

want of that love which is natural to man, and which he had despised in his unnatural state, but had now returned to a sense of, in a moment of midnight reflection:—

> I shall despair—There is no creature loves me;
> And if I die, no soul shall pity me.
> Nay, wherefore should they? since that I myself
> Find in myself no pity to myself.

Richmond and Richard before battle address those around them. The one professes to be a claimant for a throne in the interests of religion, and its instrument of punishment towards a common enemy; the other, as it were, in reply, satirises the use of it, as the invention of policy, and stigmatises the army of Richmond as brought together only for licentious purposes.

Richmond says:—

> God and our good cause fight upon our side,
> The prayers of holy saints and wronged souls,
> Like high-rear'd bulwarks, stand before our faces.
>
> * * * * *
>
> One that hath ever been God's enemy;
> Then if you fight against God's enemy,
> God will in justice 'ward you as his soldiers.

Richard says to his nobles:—

> Go, gentlemen, every man unto his charge.
> Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;
> For conscience is a word that cowards use,
> Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe:
> Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law.
> March on, join bravely, let us to't pell-mell,
> If not to heav'n, then hand in hand to hell.

Shakspere did not introduce this piece of philosophy for nothing; 'conscience' is synonymous with the poet for religion, and seems here used in that sense, as he speaks of the influence of dreams and supernatural circumstances. In giving this origin and history of religion, he leaves it to be inferred how little it had served to check the strong, but rather had been used by them as a means of oppressing the innocent. In the same sense as the above, Hamlet says conscience, or the thoughts of an hereafter, doth 'make cowards

of us all;' but it does not turn the resolution of Richard, who says, jeeringly, 'if they do not go to heaven they must go to hell;' which, even in the mouth of a Richard III., deserves the censure of a serious critic.

Knight, in remarking that 'every natural feeling is to him a jest,' must admit it of religion, which is ever mixed up and pointed at with ridicule, in the observations of Richard. Knight says, 'he does not disguise his crimes to himself or anybody else if it suits him.' He is no hypocrite, but a satirist of what he deems superstition, conscience, and religion.

We have pointed out passages asserting the supremacy of natural justice. Knight takes up the same position, endeavouring to show, from beginning to end in these historical plays, that Shakspere had that end in view in contradistinction to that poetical or religious justice which Johnson, as a pious moralist, found fault with Shakspere for not introducing.

The historical and other plays of Shakspere have been assigned by commentators to various members of the fraternity — Greene, Peele, Marlowe. From the perusal of specimens of these plays, in Knight, we should say there was not so much impiety in them as in Shakspere. But it is curious that in the few lines given of Marlowe the atheist, there are three instances of identity between him and Shakspere in the utterance of religious sentiment. One line, which savours of atheism, is exactly copied by Shakspere, only Marlowe is brief, while Shakspere goes on with the idea, and elaborates it through a whole speech. Marlowe, in Edward II., makes the king swear 'by earth, the common mother of us all.' Who does not recollect Timon's address to nature—'common mother, thou'—its development of materialism, and its impious invective? Gaveston asks Warwick if he shall not see the king? Warwick answers — 'the king of heaven, perhaps; no other king.' Why, this is the standard jest Shakspere gives in every variety, on the occasion of a man dead, or about to be put to death. Johnson thinks parts of Richard III. are 'shocking' To our mind, we cannot see much difference between a Titus Andronicus and a Richard III. The same



shocking representations would infer the same authorship, or a kindred spirit. The exaggerated enormities in the one are done seriously; in the other, by way of jest. Richard is a comic atheist; and perhaps the worse from being an invention where you are entitled to expect historical truth of character.

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

In such a play, filled with creatures of another world, superior or supernatural beings, Shakspere has found occasion in concluding these 'tricks of the imagination,' to deliver a theory of religion. Midsummer Night's Dream has become the appellation of anything purely imaginative, and totally unsubstantiated in reason, and of this nature Shakspere seems to have thought religion was. For the rest there is little allusion to religion.

Titania says of the quarrels among spirits:—

> And this same progeny of evils comes
> From our debate, from our dissension;
> We are their parents and original.

An interchange which occurs to minds whose religion approaches anthropomorphism. Upon heresies Shakspere speaks good sense when he intimates that they are hated by those who have been deceived by them. The spirits are made to laugh at mortals' oaths, and seem to take some pleasure in showing how little performance follows them. Hippolyta (Act v.) says:—

> 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.
>
> *Theseus* More strange than true. I never may believe
> These antique fables, nor these fairy toys;
> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
> Are of imagination all compact:
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
> The madman: while the lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.

> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And, as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> Such tricks hath strong imagination,
> That if he would but apprehend some joy,
> He comprehends some bringer of that joy;
> Or, in the night, imagining some fear,
> How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear.

Theseus compares together religion and reason, strangeness and truth; he makes the lunatic a Christian believer, ascribes the cause of belief in God to be the assigning creators to things (good and evil in themselves), giving to joy a bringer, and making of every trifle a fear. The description of the lunatic answers only to the Christian in his belief, and is made to correspond with the poet in imagination, creating something out of nothing. This anthropomorphism which 'bodies forth' the unknown, is certainly finely drawn. What a picture of a prophet making an interchange between earth and heaven! Had Shakspere said it religiously, what more glorious representation of an inspired penman! The old masters could not equal it on canvass. Religion descending through these human means, and attaining as great a certainty in men's minds as the very places and inhabitants of the world. Applying it more immediately to religion, how Shakspere descends; calling 'tricks of imagination' those feelings which gratefully acknowledge Providence. Then, speaking of the dread of evil, he grovels like superstition itself in comparison with his former flight. This termination is Lucretian. It will be observed that Shakspere dismisses, in a very few words, the lover, and fixes his whole attention on religion. Under various forms he continues his description of it: first he joins lunacy and religion together, then, under cover of the poet, the inspired writers and the ancient fabricators of faith in things unseen; last of all, he pursues his subject under the effects produced on the weak and credulous by a strong imagination. Now no necessity called upon him to mention religion. On the contrary, the situation required him rather to adhere to

love, and eschew philosophy for the moment. Having raised his play upon a supernatural foundation, he takes occasion, as he always does when he uses such construction, to show his contempt of the means; and not only does he endeavour to demolish his own work, but would uproot the belief of ages which has entered into the realities of life. Hippolyta reasons as most people do who have the particulars of their belief attacked: she says they all told the same story, as to wonders they had seen, though strange and beyond belief in itself:—

> But all the story of the night told over,
> And all their minds transfigur'd so together,
> More witnesseth than fancy's images,
> And grows to something of great constancy;
> But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

Hippolyta's answer is similar to those Christians make when the narrative of the Gospel is denied. However incredible the story is in itself, she thinks that so many witnesses give it consistency. She begins by saying it is 'strange.' Theseus replies that it is not 'true.' She rejoices that it is, which looks like attack and defence.



THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.

Of this play we have little to say. Hortensio, speaking of Katherine, says:—

> From all such devils, good Lord deliver us.
> *Gremio.* And me too, good Lord.

Here we have the mention of Divinity taken from the Litany of the Church Service. Katherine is constantly called 'hell.' Petruchio, speaking of his right to Katherine, parodies the tenth commandment:—

> I will be master of what is mine own:
> She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,
> My household-stuff, my field, my barn,
> My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything.

Levity is the only theological characteristic of this play.



ROMEO AND JULIET.

THIS play, in the order we give it, is classed among the early performances of Shakspere, yet is supposed to have received many touches from the author in his maturer years. As if fresh from a Midsummer Night's Dream, Shakspere seems still impressed with the desire to reduce the agency of the imagination and the force of feeling to the cold truths of biting reality. The witty Mercutio is introduced in the first Act to assail, with his ridicule and reason, Romeo under the influence of dreams and presentiments. Mercutio gone, in the fifth Act, these presentiments, from dreams on one occasion, from feeling on another, are mentioned by Romeo as contrary to the result. So that in the former instance Johnson is induced to assign to Shakspere an intention in it. 'Why does Shakspere give Romeo this involuntary cheerfulness just before the extremity of unhappiness? Perhaps to show the vanity of trusting to those uncertain and casual exaltations or depressions, which many consider as certain foretokens of good and evil.'

The friar, like the Duke friar in Measure for Measure, is more of a philosopher than a priest. He says:—

> The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb;
> What is her burying grave, that is her womb.

The commentators have remarked that the sentiment of the atheist Lucretius is put into his mouth. The Latin poet says of earth 'all producing; the same is the common sepulchre of all things.' Milton, in adopting the sentiment, has plainly shown, by a slight alteration of it, that he saw, whilst he avoided, the positive materialism involved in the expression of it by his predecessors. Whilst he calls earth the womb of nature, he adds the reservation of '*perhaps* her

grave.' Timon expatiates on the same text. Knight admits that this soliloquy of the friar 'looks like the work of one who had been reading and thinking deeply of nature's mysteries.'

The friar is religious, if the use of sacred names on light occasions in conversation with Romeo can be credited to that account: and so are all the characters, if the profanity of Shakspere, in women too, can be received in that sense. Whilst religion was omitted in the superior characters, and those whom it more especially concerned, it was given to inferior personages of the play, such as Benvolio and Balthazar, its common-places being put into their mouths.

The friar, from talking scientifically of things, and the mixture of good and evil, helps out the lovers in what Johnson calls 'those pranks which Juliet plays under the appearance of religion.' Though the doctor had said that Shakspere had not any moral purpose in his plays; yet he says of this, 'perhaps Shakspere meant to punish her hypocrisy.' It is much more certain that such passages, introduced by the poet, resulted from his indifference to religion. A little sincerity on the part of the priest might have prevented the whole tragedy, and fulfilled the benevolence which he tried to accomplish by amusing intrigues and clandestine stratagems. The friar, however, in his disposition, resembles the friar Duke in Measure for Measure: he rather enjoys the calamities of mankind, sometimes of his own making or continuing, whilst he thinks he has the power of bringing their miseries to a happy conclusion. He seems to laugh at the follies and even the opinions of mankind. He is a philosopher rather in speech than in conduct—of the school of Democritus, reasoning, but too fond of merriment. It is he who uses religion, and abuses the confessional, in the service of love, employs its language equivocally, or gives a meaning to it in words, which, from the occasion, proves false. We allude in the one instance to the speech in which he mentions the loss of heaven to Romeo; leaving it in doubt whether he did not mean by it the enjoyment of Juliet. In the other instance, when Juliet is merely sleeping from the effects of a draught given to her by himself, he addresses the consolations of religion to her family as though she were dead.

He calls the grief of her relatives, on this occasion, 'reason's merriment,' and foregoes the character of a priest when she is really dead. Real despair and death he does not confront with religion, but talks of meeting it with philosophy. When the friar tells Romeo that his sentence of death is commuted to banishment: exile from his mistress the lover calls death: to be away from her, purgatory, torture, hell; and Juliet's presence, heaven. The friar does not check the irreligion of such discourse, he rather falls in with it, and though he has the remedy for Romeo's woes, he treats with playful mockery his pupil's distresses. Of the unreasonableness of being so much disturbed by banishment, he says:—

> I'll give thee armour to keep off that word,
> Adversity's sweet milk, philosophy,
> To comfort thee, though thou art banished.

Romeo, growing more desperate in the idea of Juliet's anger at the death of her kinsman, draws his sword to kill himself. Amongst other arguments to dissuade him, the friar says he is happy in the deed which has made him desperate—the killing Tybalt instead of Tybalt killing him. He counts it amongst his blessings, and tells him not to pout at his fortune. He comes at last to that which at first would have dispensed with a scene, saved him the delivery of a lecture, avoided the torture of suspense in Romeo, and opened a future which would at once have stayed the hand of suicide. He tells him at the end of his long speech (which seems playing with Romeo), that he may go and consummate his marriage which he had contrived. Such intelligence, as might be expected, completely and instantaneously restores Romeo to a love of life. Romeo, when buying poison, reasons as though misery cancelled the obligations of religion. He demands of the starved apothecary:—

> Art thou so bare and full of wretchedness,
> And fear'st to die?

Romeo, who has so often talked of killing himself, never speaks of heaven or hell, of his immortal soul or of Juliet's, at last commits suicide with a forgetfulness of all but the present. He says he never will depart from her, but stay



with her only, there to be devoured by worms. He even ridicules the idea of anything unsubstantial hereafter, and confronts it with the facts of materialism :—

> O here
> Will I set up my everlasting rest;
> And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
> From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last!
> Arms, take your last embrace! and lips, O you
> The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
> A dateless bargain to engrossing death.

Nothing can be more material than all the terms here employed in speaking of death. He compares himself to a ship rushing on the rocks, where all ends. He drinks, and says :—

> Thus with a kiss I die.

No thought of meeting his Juliet in heaven, after the unhappy circumstances of their lives, nor even hoping for everlasting union in spirit, which some of these commentators have supposed for them. Had not Shakspere an unconquerable disbelief, we say it would have been most natural to have introduced some sentiment of the sort, instead of every thought diametrically opposite to the idea of the immortality of the soul and a future state.

When both Juliet and Romeo have really died by their own hands, the friar has to console the parents; but never alludes to those sources of comfort, upon which it became his profession to dwell.

When the romantic couple are no more, it would at least have been a necessary compliance with custom to appoint masses to be said for their souls. Yet it is overlooked, although nothing was more easy to have done, as the parties were of the families of great persons—the Montagues and Capulets, and this friar their friend.

The moral of the play is Mackintosh's—individuals and society cannot exist under the mutual infliction of injuries. Shakspere leaves the two old family trunks, and strips off all the branches of the houses of Montague and Capulet. They indulged their hatred, injurious to themselves and to others, and they suffered by it, instead of enjoying the love and good-will natural to mankind. Shakspere did not think

it necessary to draw the conclusion, that from the miseries on earth, there must be happiness in heaven; that the good and the evil here made rewards and punishments necessary there. Of men, even in his own beautiful creations of Romeo and Juliet, he made nothing spiritual. He caused them to arise, and dismissed them to the earth, as the common lot of humanity. Had he given them the certain hope of an immortality of love in the next world—their right as Christians—it would have been true to character, and a consolation to the living, thinking of the dead, instead of the gloomy annihilation and sorrow of 'no more, no more,' which possess alike the corpses and those present in existence at the close of this drama. Shakspere seems to have wished to convey the moral, that death was the end of our joys, as he so often says it is the end of our miseries. The material and sensual seems to have been the aim of the play, and in arriving at the latter, the object of life was sufficiently attained without an hereafter.



THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

In this play Shakspere seems to have contrived a medium of assailing religion, Jewish and Christian. He appears to have had strongly before him a sense of the ridiculous in the differences insisted on in these beliefs.

The character from whom the play has its title, has little to say. The sketch of the merchant is not drawn favourably. Melancholy—the view Shakspere had of religion—is given to him, and the most perverse unconquerable bigotry. Religion influences him contrary to the moral precepts of Christianity, and the kindliness of his own nature. Generous to all Christians, he would not only be cruel to a Jew, but would return to him evil for good. The other merchants are irreligious contrasts. In the opening dialogue betwixt the merchants, who are imagining the causes which can produce the melancholy of Antonio, one says if he had his ventures at sea, a church would appear to him a rock. Gratiano, contrasting his own levity with the more serious dispositions of others, introduces the words of Jesus respecting the damnation incurred by those who call each other fools.

This apparently excessive penalty for so trifling an offence, when Jesus was preaching forgiveness of injuries, has often been remarked upon, and in various ways endeavour has been made to account for it by giving different meanings to his words. However, Shakspere has taken their literal acceptation, and has endeavoured to insinuate on what slight and oft-occuring grounds the religion of Jesus may damn us to all eternity. It is in derision of silent people, of whom he says:—

Who, I'm very sure,
If they should speak, would almost damn those ears,
Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.

The ladies who come next, Portia and Nerissa, are not much better Christians. The lady consults her maid upon her suitors. Nerissa asks Portia what she thinks of the French lord. Portia says:—

God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man. In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker.

Portia would say, if I ought not to believe that a God had made him, I should be disposed to think that he was not a man, but I will not allow myself to doubt on this point, as I know it to be a sin. On other occasions, Shakspere has made observations much to the same effect; and this is an instance in which he repeats an apology for expressions of this description. Hamlet says, he does not wish to be profane in the mention of such thoughts; and Portia acknowledges this mockery to be a sin. It seems clear, therefore, that Shakspere, wittingly, ventured upon infidelity, and aware of what might he said against him, that he confessed to his own profanity. We have, or shall have, to quote much stronger expressions than Portia's, and should not particularise hers, did not Shakspere himself draw attention to them.

The rest of her remarks on her lovers partake of the same strain of profane levity; the language and the ideas, as is usual with Shakspere, seeming to border on the sacred. The satire on the Scotch, Shakspere omitted when James came to the throne. Shakspere knew what respect was, and could observe it to a king, but not to religion. He feared the one but not the other; he would show open profanity and never cancel it; but the least want of reverence in the things of this world he could correct. Have we not, therefore, evidence of his infidelity?

When Bassanio asks Shylock to dine with him, he answers:—

Yes to smell pork, to eat of the habitation which your prophet, the Nazarite, conjured the devil into.

This story is not taken in a literal sense by Christians generally; Shakspere, however, adopts the literal version of it, that the Jew may turn it into ridicule by a remark, witty, certainly, but one that hardly ever occurred except to a Shakspere.

When Shakspere makes Shylock introduce the artifice practised on the sheep of Laban by Jacob, as an argument for taking usury, which was no sin in itself, it seems to be done for the purpose of animadverting on the morality of Scripture. Bacon defended usury, and no doubt our poet entertained the same philosophical idea of it, and was inclined to ridicule the prejudices against it; but this turn in question gives him the opportunity of inferring another contradiction to be drawn from sacred writ. He puts into the mouth of Antonio:—

> Mark you this, Bassanio?
> The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.

He satirises the convenience of religion for cloaking crime elsewhere in this play, which, as it seems to be its text, we give here from the mouth of Bassanio:—

> In religion
> What damned error, but some sober brow
> Will bless it, and approve it with a text,
> Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?

The Christians do wrong to the Jews, and the Jews would not only claim the wild justice of revenge, but be taught by religion, and better the instruction, as he says, from Christianity, in ill doing. This is the serious intention of the drama; and in the episode of the play, the religious principle, as countenancing filial impiety, ingratitude, robbery of a father, is made a joke of, to accomplish the exposure of religion. Shakspere makes Shylock say, that the common nature of men ought to be the causes of charity between them. The Jew points at the religion of Christians, which, he says, talks of humility, and practises pride and cruelty:—

> For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.

He asks Antonio whether for being spit upon, kicked, and

called dog, he shall with humbleness say for these courtesies:—

I'll lend you thus much moneys.

When these injuries are repeated, and all the Christian community give evidence that they were in a conspiracy against him, and Antonio falls in his power, Shylock's speech is a recapitulation and continuation of the preceding, defending the course he takes, and the justice of his cause. When asked whether he will exact the forfeit of Antonio's flesh, he answers yes, to gratify his revenge, and demands the reason that Antonio hath committed against him all these unprovoked injuries, because a Jew:—

Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?—if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? revenge: if a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be, by Christian example? why, revenge. The villany you teach me, I will execute; and it shall go hard, but I will better the instruction.

When Shylock tells Antonio he will lend him money spite of the insufferable injuries he has received, the Christian tells him he will be as like to repeat those injuries though he does take the money. The Jew is made again by Shakspere to deliver his opinion of Christian charity:—

And for my love, I pray you, wrong me not.

Antonio, in the true spirit of a bigot, cannot think a man capable of virtue, unless religious in the same sense as himself, and assigns the evidence of the Jew's kindness as a certainty of his approaching conversion to Christianity:—

Hie thee, gentle Jew.
This Hebrew will turn Christian; he grows kind.

Conscience is used several times by Shakspere as synonymous with religion; and in the speech of Launcelot on it, he

plainly shows, by the example he gives, that the reasonings of his conscience are the arguments of his religion, which he dignifies as the force of conscience. He brings the sublime in religion to the ridiculous, by arguing on one of those pious dilemmas which are so often heard of, as disturbing, and rendering wretched, the minds of perplexed Christians.

It appears, too, from him, that there was a proverb which implied, there was a very good division between the grace of God and riches. One was as good as another, and the latter was to be put up with from necessity, as in the case of the extravagant and ruined Bassanio. Gratiano, the witty gentleman of Shakspere, in common with the clowns, extracts his merriment from religion.

We gave an early specimen in his allusion to the sermon on the mount. Bassanio tells him that he will not introduce him to Portia, because to her, to whom he is unknown, he might appear too liberal in his conversation, which in their eyes was no fault. That religion was referred to is evident from the answer of Gratiano, who draws a Puritan as a picture of his future propriety:—

> Signior Bassanio, hear me.
> If I do not put on a sober habit,
> Talk with respect, and swear but now and then,
> Wear prayer-books in my pockets, look demurely;
> Nay more, while grace is saying, hood mine eyes
> Thus with my hat, and sigh, and say, amen;
> Use all th' observance of civility,
> Like one well-studied in a sad ostent
> To please his grandam; never trust me more:—

barring, he says, the approaching debauch of the night; in which Bassanio says he is to put on 'his boldest suit of mirth.' The ridicule is confined to the description, and as Gratiano does not appear in his new character, he may be considered as ridiculing religion without justification; particularly as Portia was no Puritan. Jessica says to Launcelot:—

> Our house is hell, and thou a merry devil.

Launcelot answers:—

> If a Christian do not play the knave, and get thee, I am much deceived.

Launcelot is not deceived. Lorenzo acknowledges the intention of being an accomplice of Jessica in the robbery of her father, and gives as his justification the plea of religion—that if the father come to heaven, he will by the merit of his daughter, and says:—

No misfortune shall cross her, except under the excuse that she is issue of a faithless Jew.

The rather unfeeling jokes of the Christians on the Jew's losses are of course mixed up with the mockeries which religion supplied to one faction, and puns on damnation, which Shakspere cannot keep out of the thoughts of the Jew, made frantic with his misfortunes. Portia says she 'would rather be foresworn than lose Bassanio, and fortune may go to hell, not she for it.'

Shylock says to Antonio, of whom he would have the pound of flesh:—

Thou calledst me a dog before thou hadst a cause.

The cause was religion—Launcelot having said his conscience, or religion, will serve him in running away from his master. Having made a joke of religion and the devil, and having declared that the fiend gave more friendly counsel than the conscience, he very consequentially ridicules salvation. He quotes Moses to the Jew's daughter:—

The sins of the father are to be laid upon the children, therefore be of good cheer, for truly, I think, you are damned.

The only hope that can do her any good is, he says, that her mother committed adultery; that she is a bastard, and not the Jew's daughter. 'That were a kind of bastard hope,' says Jessica, 'for then the sins of my mother would be visited upon me.' This return to the commandment in mockery shows in what sense Shakspere regarded a doctrine which mere moralists have declared repugnant to natural justice. There being in the Old Testament no doctrine of a future state, the sins of parents descending to their children seems to supply its place in the moral economy of Jewish government. But the application of it by Shakspere, including the eternal damnation of the Christian dispensation, is revolting. Launcelot, in reply, says:—'Truly, then, I

fear you are damned by father and mother—well, I fear you are damned both ways.' 'No,' replies Jessica, 'I am saved by my husband, who hath made me Christian.' 'The more the blame,' returns Launcelot:—

> There were quite enough Christians; as many as could live by one another. This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs; if we grow all to be pork-eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money.

Jessica tells to her husband what Launcelot has said of her, and that she has fallen out with him, as he tells her there is no mercy for her in heaven, 'because she is a Jew's daughter.' We cannot believe in the religious sentiments of the author who put these things into the mouths of his characters.

Jessica converted to a Christian, not only is a ready receiver and interchanger of jokes with Launcelot on her new faith, but talks sentimentally of such a wife as Portia being a heaven on earth to Bassanio; and if he did not think so, he ought not to be saved. She takes her illustration from Paganism, as if a plurality of gods were all the same.

The Jew, remonstrated with by the duke, on taking a man's flesh, asks if Christians do not make slaves, and do what they like with them?—inferring that they do not do as they would be done unto. Gratiano cannot be restrained from punning on the soul, because the Jew sharpens his knife on the *sole* of his shoe, and asks him if he will listen to no prayers; to which the Jew answers, none your wit can invent. Then follows the usual vein of irreligion:—

> *Gratiano.* O be thou damn'd, inexecrable dog!
> And for thy life let justice be accus'd!
> Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith,
> To hold opinion with Pythagoras,
> That souls of animals infuse themselves
> Into the trunks of men.

Shylock calls this wit, and tells him to repair it, or it will fall to ruin. He says, 'the deed is upon his head,' which the commentators say is taken from the expression of the Jews towards Jesus. He also gives another motive of reli-

given—that he has registered an oath in heaven, and would not lay perjury on his soul. This is often Portia's religious plea for mercy, and seems to say the religious motive for the wrong is as good as for the right; that one argument drawn from the storehouse of faith is equal to another. Portia, in her speech to Shylock, as the counsel for Antonio, in mitigation of the penalty of his pound of flesh, tells the Jew he must be merciful; and he asking on what compulsion, she says of mercy:—

> It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heav'n,
> Upon the place beneath. It is twice bless'd;
> It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.

This is a beautiful idea of the existence of natural morality in general; it yields its reward as certain as the cultivators of nature reap their advantages. It is not till she has thus delivered herself of morality, apart from all religion, that Shakspere (Portia keeping to the character of a believer) makes her assert to the Jew that mercy is the attribute of their God, and it is to be like God to show mercy. The Christians, as Christians, having shown no mercy to the Jew, Shylock had said that he would 'better their instruction,' and had prayed to God to give him revenge. This, with the frequent invocations made by Shakspere's characters for mercy and justice, which passed unanswered, and the more frequent supplications for vengeance which came to pass, show in what light Shakspere would have these ideas understood. Almost in the same words, Tamora, in Titus Andronicus, and Isabella, in Measure for Measure, plead for mercy. So far Shakspere was true to character and to nature, for these three instances of the use of religious sentiments are given to women, and to women, as is the case, he gave more a feeling of religion than to men. Knight says of this speech, Douce has pointed to the following verse in Ecclesiasticus (ch. xxxv., v. 20), as having suggested the beautiful image of the rain from heaven:—'Mercy is seasonable in the time of affliction, as clouds of rain in the time of drought.' The subsequent passage, when Portia says 'we do pray for mercy,' is considered by Sir William Blackstone to be out of character as addressed to a Jew. Shakspere had probably the Lord's Prayer immediately in

his mind; but the sentiment is also found in Ecclesiasticus, ch. xxviii. Certainly, in the fusion Christianity is dropped, and pure Deism is arrived at as if there was no particularity of faith between Jew and Christian. What right has a Christian Portia to talk of salvation to a Jew, when she knows that by the merits of Christ man alone could be saved?

Gratiano cannot help speculating on the power of heaven to change the heart of man—and discrediting the means which are assigned by religion to persuade the Deity, by prayers, he wishes his wife in heaven to act the intercessor between them. The last sentence implying the usual doubt of Shakspere, which he had just before put in the mouth of Gratiano, that there was a Providence:—

> *Gratiano.* I have a wife, whom I protest I love;
> I would she were in heaven, so she could
> Intreat *some power* to change this currish Jew.

From such reflections Shylock is made to exclaim:—

> These be the Christian husbands. I've a daughter;
> 'Would any of the stock of Barrabas
> Had been her husband, rather than a Christian!

Gratiano would give the Jew a halter gratis for the sake of God, an expression which Shakspere often makes a joke of, and is here additionally ridiculous when they had been talking of a God of mercy. The pious Christian Antonio, on the contrary, is made to talk of the gentleman who stole the Jew's daughter, as if he had thought he had done a good deed. Life is granted to the Jew, on condition of his turning Christian, on which Gratiano returns to his jokes:—

> In christening thou shalt have two godfathers.
> Had I been judge, thou should'st have had ten more,
> To bring thee to the gallows, not the font;

comparing the holy office of baptism and life everlasting to twelve jurymen condemning a criminal to death.

Lorenzo discourses to Jessica upon the music of the spheres—the orbs singing like angels quiring to the cherubims. This he declares 'such harmony as is in immortal souls,' but 'the muddy vesture of decay prevents our hearing it.' His next step is to call to the musicians 'to wake



Diana with a hymn.' Knight gives the following illustration of this speech:—'Mr. Hallam, in his interesting account of the philosophy of Campanella, thus paraphrases one of the most imaginative passages of the Dominican friar: "The sky and stars are endowed with the keenest sensibility; nor is it unreasonable to suppose that they signify their mutual thoughts to each other by the transference of light, and that their sensibility is full of pleasure. The blessed spirits that enforce such living and bright mansions, behold all things in nature, and in the divine ideas; they have also a more glorious light than their own, through which they are elevated to a supernatural beatific vision." Mr. Hallam adds: "We can hardly read this without recollecting the most sublime passage perhaps in Shakspere—the speech of Lorenzo to Jessica. Shakspere took his imagination from all men; and in the commencement of happy love, at the view of the heavens what could be more pleasing to the soul, than the idea of the endless music of love to each other's ears?' But it would be too much to say that Shakspere believed it: he has here left a given and received truth to embark in the regions of poetical and philosophical fancy. To his curious and inquisitive mind, the theory presented itself in a form adapted to poetry, and he therefore used it. Had he given even this elevation of thought to a Romeo or Juliet, it would have left a balm to the agony of the lovers and the readers of their story.

Knight says:—'Campanella was of a later period than Shakspere, who probably found the idea in some of the Platonic works, of which his writings unquestionably show that he was a student.' The truth was, this friar was confined the greatest period of his life for heresy, and wrote in prison. He was one of those imbued with Pantheistic philosophy to which Hallam shows a leaning. The universality of matter and life is Pantheism. Mr. Knight has not given us any other proof of Shakspere's knowledge of Plato, and he might easily learn this morsel from an extract, or from his fellow dramatists—Marlowe, Greene, and Peele, who came from Cambridge. Knight says, 'in his hands it has reached its utmost perfection of beauty,' and has given parallel passages from Milton and Coleridge, showing its suitability to

poetical and philosophical minds, if not to religion and the certainties of revelation. It is evident that Shakspere will go anywhere for an illustration. Knight asserts that what we call natural morality is the fundamental idea of this play; and a German author, Ulrici, has given a long commentary expounding its philosophy. But they do not say that it is morality apart from religion, and intended to reflect upon its mysterious and providential influence, which is no where considered more visible than in the relations between Jew and Gentile.



KING HENRY IV.—PART I.

KING HENRY no sooner speaks than he is an instance how difficult it is for Shakspere to draw a religious character —sentiments of a contrary nature perpetually showing the mind of the author. We have heard it often remarked by religious people that their every sentiment betrayed their way of thinking, and sceptics acknowledge a sort of free-masonry amongst themselves by which the initiated in irreligion become known to each other. We think by this rule Shakspere would be repudiated by the one, as he would be recognised by the other class. King Henry, according to some editions, apostrophises Erinnys, a heathen deity, as the occasion of civil war, saying:—

> No more the thirsty Erinnys of this soil
> Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood.

The old readings give 'Entrance' instead of 'Erinnys,' (more material but less poetical) which stands for mouth. According to Knight, this is an instance of the occurrence of Scripture to Shakspere, and of its incorporation in its plays. Knight remarks, that when Shakspere wrote this line, this passage from Genesis was in his mind:—'And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brothers' blood from thy hand.' Shakspere next introduces a material idea which seems to evolve the universe and its appearances, as well as man who sees them, in one common substance:—

> Those opposed eyes,
> Which, like the meteors of a troubled heaven,
> All of one nature, of one substance bred:
> Therefore, friends,

As far as to the sepulchre of Christ
(Whose soldier now, under whose blessed cross
We are impressed and engag'd to fight,)
Forthwith a power of English shall we levy;
Whose arms were moulded in their mothers' womb
To chase these pagans, in those holy fields,
Over whose acres walk'd those blessed feet,
Which, fourteen hundred years ago, were nail'd,
For our advantage, on the bitter cross.
But this our purpose is a twelvemonth old,
And bootless 'tis to tell you—we will go.

This is predestination which could imagine men born for such a purpose.

On the king asking what his council had done in forwarding this expedition, he is told of a battle lost in Wales, and answers:—

It seems then, that the tidings of this broil
Brake off our business for the Holy Land.

When he hears of the doings of Harry Hotspur, he says:

Yea, there thou mak'st me sad, and mak'st me sin
In envy that my lord Northumberland
Should be the father of so blest a son:
A son who is the theme of honour's tongue;
Amongst a grove, the very straightest plant;
Who is sweet Fortune's minion, and her pride:
O, that it could be prov'd,
That some night-tripping fairy had exchang'd
In cradle-clothes our children where they lay.

When he hears that Percy will not give up all his prisoners, he says:—

But I have sent for him to answer this;
And, for this cause, awhile we must neglect
Our holy purpose to Jerusalem.

The first appearance of Falstaff and Prince Henry is initiatory of their religious levity. Falstaff asks, 'Now, Hal, what time of day is it, lad?' Hal replies, 'What the devil hast thou to do with the time of the day?' and after recounting Falstaff's lascivious mode of living, he affirms—'I see no reason why thou should'st be so superfluous to demand the time of the day.'

Shakspere's Falstaff assumes the language of religion,



makes the object of attack not only the particulars, but the essentials of it; he ridicules not only the Puritans of his times, but the belief of Christians. The professors of the faith, the over-righteous alone, are satirised in this style in the Tartuffe of Molière; yet the French author became at once stamped as an infidel.

Falstaff's language is a composition of the Tartuffe and the Cantwell, with a mixture of the Mawworm in it. He ridicules Scripture, most frequently its subjects, and the very words of the Saviour of mankind. We elsewhere show that Shakspere not only ridicules but reasons against Christ, his words and doctrines.

Falstaf. God save thy grace (majesty, I should say; for grace thou wilt have none.)

P. Henry. What, none?

Fal. No, by my troth; not so much as will serve to be prologue to an egg and butter.

Falstaff tells the prince to trouble him no more with vanity, that he wants to buy good names for them both, as a lord in council had rated him about the prince even in the street:—

I marked him not, I regarded him not, yet he talked very wisely, and in the street, too.

P. Henry. Thou did'st well; for wisdom cries out in the street, and no man regards it.

Here is a passage of Scripture introduced, which claims additionally the reverence of Christians as supposed to be spoken prophetically of Jesus:—

Fal. O thou hast damnable iteration; and art, indeed, able to corrupt a saint. Thou hast done much harm upon me, Hal—God forgive thee for it! Before I knew thee, Hal, I knew nothing; and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked. I must give over this life, and I will give it over; by the Lord, and I do not, I am a villain; I'll be damned for never a king's son in Christendom.

The transition from this jesting piety to the commission of sin, from allusions to his way of life, to some practice in a worse way of life; from a touch of religious melancholy to a call for an indecent song to chase it away, makes the point

of Shakspere. Falstaff had said, 'Call me a villain if I don't repent;' and when the prince asks him if he won't steal a purse, he answers, 'Call me a villain if I don't.' Says the prince:—

I see a good amendment of life in thee; from praying to purse-taking.

Fal. Why, Hal, 'tis my vocation, Hal; 'tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation.

Then speaking of Poins, who enters, he says:—

Oh, if men were to be saved by merit, what hole in hell were hot enough for him?

Poins. What says Monsieur Remorse? Jack, how agrees the devil and thee about thy soul, that thou soldest him on Good Friday last, for a cup of Madeira, and a cold capon's leg?

Prince. Sir John stands to his word, the devil shall have his bargain; for he was never yet a breaker of proverbs, he will give the devil his due.

Poins. Then art thou damned for keeping thy word with the devil.

It will be observed, that in one speech Falstaff ridicules the church service of grace and atonement.

When Poins tells Sir John he will lay down such reasons that the prince will join in the robbery, Falstaff answers him in a strain which would at the present time be, and surely was then, a parody on a religious discourse:—

Well, may'st thou have the spirit of persuasion, and he the ears of profiting, that what thou speakest may move, and what he hears may be believed, that the true prince may (for recreation sake) prove a false thief; for the abuses of the time want countenance.

Such expressions are to be found in print among the formularies of the church, and are stereotyped in the phraseology of the pious.

Harry Hotspur is introduced as a being of a very different character to the king and his son, who, in their several careers of ambition and profligacy, were both troubled by religious scruples. Hotspur would conquer religion, the heavens as well as the earth, could he, as he says, gain honour by it. He speaks of religion to set at naught its hopes and fears, which might be obstacles in the ways of other men. When the king tells Northumberland—



Send us your prisoners.—
Hotspur. And if the devil come and roar for them,
I will not send them.
Speak of Mortimer?
Zounds, I will speak of him; and let my soul
Want mercy, if I do not join with him.

Again, of his prisoners:—

I'll keep them all;
By heaven, he shall not have a Scot of them:
No, if a Scot would save his soul, he shall not:
I'll keep them, by this hand.

In the inn yard at Rochester, one carrier says to the other, 'Come, and be hanged: hast no faith in thee,' as if the certainty of another ought to be sufficient security for giving up this life, or it is an allusion to the Puritans who were hanged for having a faith. Gadshill describes Falstaff and his set as worshipping the patron saint of rogues, and being his clergy; as more given, however, to drinking than praying—then playing upon the word, he says he lies, they do pray continually to their saint, the commonwealth, or rather not pray to her, but 'prey on her.'

Falstaff, on finding lime in his sack, and imputing cowardice to the prince for not being present, as he thought, at the robbery, says:—

There is nothing but roguery to be found in villainous man. God help the while, a bad world, I say; I would I were a weaver, I could sing psalms or anything.

When he gives a relation of his fighting in the robbery, the prince says:—

Pray Heaven you have not murthered some of them.
Falstaff. Nay, that's past praying for.

On finding the prince has the money, he says:—

Hostess, clap to the doors, watch to-night, pray to-morrow.

Irreligious, but more so if it has an allusion either to the seven virgins, or Jesus and his disciples on the Mount of Olives. When Falstaff represents the king, the prince's father, he says, after giving to himself the appearance of sundry good qualities:—

If, then, the tree may be known by the fruit, as the fruit by the tree, then peremptorily I speak it, there is virtue in that Falstaff; him keep with—the rest banish.

Prince Henry takes the character of his father, and says:

There is a devil haunts thee in the likeness of a fat old man, Falstaff, that old white-bearded Satan.

Falstaff answers as the prince and son:—

If sack and sugar be a fault, God help the wicked; if to be old and merry be a sin, then many an old host that I know is damned: if to be fat be to be hated, then Pharaoh's lean kine are to be loved.

Thus he makes religion, by its profane introduction, the matter of his mirth. When he hears the sheriffs are in pursuit of him, he says:—

If I become not a cart as well as another man, a plague on my bringing up! I hope I shall as soon be strangled with a halter as another.

Glendower compliments the bravery of Hotspur, and says:—

For by that name as oft as Lancaster
Doth speak of you, his cheek looks pale; and with
A rising sigh, he wisheth you in heaven.
Hotspur. And you in hell, as often as he hears
Owen Glendower spoke of.
Glend. I cannot blame him: at my nativity,
The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,
Of burning cressets; and at my birth,
The frame and huge foundation of the earth
Shak'd like a coward.
Hot. Why, so it would have done
At the same season, if your mother's cat had
But kitten'd, though yourself had ne'er been born.
Glend. I say, the earth did shake when I was born.
Hot. And I say, the earth was not of my mind,
If you suppose, as fearing you it shook.
Glend. The heavens were all on fire, the earth did tremble.
Hot. O, then the earth shook to see the heavens on fire,
And not in fear of your nativity.
Diseased nature oftentimes breaks forth
In strange eruptions: oft the teeming earth
Is with a kind of cholic pinch'd and vex'd
By the imprisoning of unruly wind
Within her womb; which, for enlargement striving,
Shakes the old beldame earth, and topples down
Steeples, and moss-grown towers. At your birth,
Our grandam earth, having this distemperature,
In passion shook.

Glendower is very angry at the incredulity of Hotspur, and reiterates again and again the signs that he thought marked him extraordinary. Hotspur not only replies with badinage, but ascribes, with Baconian induction, all that Glendower thought miraculous and providential to nature and the earth. Glendower not only refers to his birth, but to the courses of his life, as showing him not in the roll of common men. To prove that he is heaven-born and bred, he says:—

> Cousin, of many men
> I do not bear these crossings. Give me leave
> To tell you once again,—that at my birth,
> The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes;
> The goats ran from the mountains, and the herds
> Were strangely clamorous to the frighted fields.
> These signs have mark'd me extraordinary;
> And all the courses of my life do show,
> I am not in the roll of common men.
> Where is he living,—clipp'd in with the sea
> That chides the banks of England, Scotland, Wales,—
> Which calls me pupil, or hath read to me?
> And bring him out, that is but woman's son,
> Can trace me in the tedious way of art,
> And hold me pace in deep experiments.

On Hotspur expressing his disbelief and indifference, Mortimer tells him to hold his peace, or he will make Glendower mad:—

> *Glendower.* I can call spirits from the vasty deep.
> *Hotspur.* Why, so can I; or so can any man:
> But will they come, when you do call for them?
> *Glend.* Why, I can teach you, cousin, to command
> The devil.
> *Hot.* And can I teach thee, coz, to shame the devil,
> By telling truth: Tell truth, and shame the devil.
> If thou hast power to raise him, bring him hither,
> And I'll be sworn, I have power to shame him hence.
> O, while you live, tell truth, and shame the devil.
> *Mortimer.* Come, come,
> No more of this unprofitable chat.

Glendower shows his religion by making Lancaster, with a sigh, wish Hotspur in heaven; and Shakspere puts in the mouth of this very Henry IV., and other hypocrites, the

wish that their enemies may find peace in a better world. Hotspur, on the other hand, shows the state of his faith by that cool mention of hell and damnation which Johnson expresses his horror at meeting with, so often, in Shakspere. Glendower's mention of fiery shapes and burning cressets at his birth, (lights in the shape of a cross) and the trembling of the earth, shaking from its foundation, having been once used on a more serious occasion, ought not to be adduced over and over again, to be ridiculed and argued against by an unbeliever. Then not content with this similarity to a sacred event and character, Shakspere makes Glendower say that he was untaught of men, that he did not derive his power from them, and that he had command over devils. Now when we know all these proofs are given as marks of a divine commission from heaven in the person of the Saviour—that he was without any education but what he received from a divine inspiration, and that his power over the spirits was acknowledged as the greatest evidence of his divinity, that no woman's son could compete with him, because he was not of woman born, we think Shakspere could not have drawn such a parallel without an intentional disrespect to Christianity. Then this emphatic appeal of Shakspere to truth, putting it so strongly and so often in contrast with supernaturalism, looks as if he challenged everything of the kind to stand the test of truth. A third person calling it 'unprofitable chat' is the usual way Shakspere has of marking additionally his opinion of this and all other religious questions, and the usual way they are treated by men of the world, neither religious nor professedly infidel. Hotspur answered Glendower on his birth as Edmund, in Lear, remarks on his own. Hotspur, to show his preference of temporal over spiritual matters, had said he would 'go to dinner,' and Mortimer turns from the 'unprofitable chat' to the business of civil war with the 'Come, come,' with which Edmund will dismiss it for domestic treason. But Shakspere, as is his wont, cannot let the subject drop so easily without showing afresh his opinion of religion, caricatured as it was by Glendower. When he makes his exit, Mortimer finds fault with Hotspur for having attacked the religious belief of his father-in-law. Hotspur says he cannot help it,



that it angers him to hear of prodigies and prophecies, which he calls:—

> Such skimble-skamble stuff
> As puts me from my faith:—

that Glendower will talk to him for nine hours of the several devils' names that are his lacqueys, and that he marks him not a word, and that he would rather live the worst life than the best with such conversation. Hotspur shows that his faith was in nature and reason—in his own experience; and he makes no exceptions for divinity or providential acts which may stop its course. He evidently felt the indignation of an infidel at the bare mention of religious belief, and would not listen, but flatly contradicted, attacked, and ridiculed the religious feelings of others. Johnson himself could not have been well pleased at a belief in supernaturalism, which he shared to a greater extent than other men, being called 'stuff.' Shakspere represents the Welsh as rather silly and superstitious, and the result is that Glendower, 'o'erruled by prophecies,' as the Archbishop of York says, absents himself from his friends, and ruins the cause. Hotspur, it will be seen, dies a materialist, leaving the more pious prince to commend him to heaven. As his speech on nature partook of materialism, in opposition to spiritualism, so his dying words on man, the action of time on life, the thought of man, his destiny, have no mention of a soul and an after state beyond this.

Falstaff being of opinion that he has grown 'thin,' says to Bardolph:—

> Well, I'll repent, and that suddenly, while I am in some liking; I shall be out of heart shortly, and then I shall have no strength to repent. An I have not forgotten what the inside of a church is made of, I am a pepper corn, a brewer's horse: the inside of a church! Company, villanous company, hath been the spoil of me.
>
> *Bar.* Sir John, you are so fretful, you cannot live long.
>
> *Fal.* Why there it is: come, sing me a bawdy song; make me merry.

Falstaff jokes on Bardolph's nose; and on his replying that it does him no harm, Falstaff says:—

> No, I'll be sworn; I make as good use of it as many a man doth

of a death's head, or a *memento mori:* I never see thy face, but I think on hell-fire, and Dives that lived in purple; for there he is in his robes, burning, burning.

This illustration of a future state is a favourite subject of ridicule with Shakspere: the idea, be it remembered, is Christ's own, and one of the most terrible which could be given of the Christian resurrection to life everlasting. Falstaff goes on:—

If thou wert any way given to virtue, I would swear by thy face; my oath should be, By this fire: but thou art altogethergiven over, and wert indeed, but for the light in thy face, the son of utter darkness. O, thou art a perpetual triumph, an everlasting bonfire light.

Here comes again the peculiar wit of Shakspere, which we have twice elsewhere. The 'everlasting bonfire' is the denomination which he gives, and makes all those whom he represents as not afraid of it give, to the place of eternal torments. Falstaff says, there is no more faith in the hostess than a stewed prune, and the prince says:—'There is no room for faith in him.'

Falstaff says:—

Dost thou hear, Hal? thou knowest, in the state of innocency, Adam fell; and what should poor Jack Falstaff do, in the days of villany: thou see'st I have more flesh than another man, and, therefore, more frailty.

The story of Adam and a state of innocence, and the sinfulness of the flesh, are here ridiculed; as elsewhere, Shakspere argues against the opinion of original sin, and its descent to posterity. Falstaff, giving a description of the soldiers he has enlisted, says they are—

Slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dog licked his sores:—you would think I had a hundred and fifty tattered prodigals, lately come from swine keeping, from eating draff and husks.

Both these are favourite illustrations, taken from Scripture, which can never be seriously put into a comic mouth but to excite laughter. The way he speaks of his men to the princes is very mortal indeed; Napoleon could not have had more indifference for their immortal souls:—

Fal. Tut, tut, good enough to toss, food for powder, food for powder: they'll fill a pit as well as better—tush, man—mortal men, mortal men.

When Falstaff asks the prince to take care of him in the battle, Prince Henry tells him to say his prayers. Falstaff says, he—

Would it were bed-time, and all well.

P. Hen. Why, thou owest Heaven a death.

Fal. 'Tis not due yet; I would be loath to pay him before his day. What need I be so forward with him that calls not on me?

Here he ridicules the Almighty, before battle too, likening him to one of his creditors, whom he does not wish to pay more than any other: Shakspere elsewhere makes the same joke, and the particular doctrine of a call is here again introduced to have it thrown in the face of the divinity of Christians, as not necessitating any forwardness on the part of those who have not received such a complimentary summons to the next world. On seeing the dead body of Sir Walter Blunt, he says:—

Give me life, which if I can save, so; if not, honour comes unlooked for, and there's an end.

When Douglas enters, he fights with Falstaff, who falls down as if he were dead; Hotspur is wounded, and falls:—

Hot. O, Harry, thou hast robb'd me of my youth:
I better brook the loss of brittle life,
Than those proud titles thou hast won on me;
They wound my thoughts, worse than thy sword my flesh:
But thought's the slave of life, and life time's fool;
And time, that takes survey of all the world,
Must have a stop. O, I could prophesy,
But that the earthy and cold hand of death
Lies on my tongue: No, Percy, thou art dust,
And food for—
[*Dies.*

P. Hen. For worms, brave Percy; Fare thee well, great heart!
Ill-weav'd ambition, how much art thou shrunk!
When that this body did contain a spirit,
A kingdom for it was too small a bound;
But now, two paces of the vilest earth
Is room enough:—This earth, that bears thee dead,
Bears not alive so stout a gentleman.
If thou wert sensible of courtesy,
I should not make so dear a show of zeal:
But let my favours hide thy mangled face;
And, even in thy behalf, I'll thank myself

For doing these fair rites of tenderness.
Adieu, and take thy praise with thee to heaven!
Thy ignominy sleep with thee in the grave,
But not remember'd in thy epitaph!—

[*He sees* Falstaff *on the ground.*

What! old acquaintance! could not all this flesh
Keep in a little life? Poor Jack, farewell!
I could have better spar'd a better man.
O, I should have a heavy miss of thee,
If I were much in love with vanity.
Death hath not struck so fine a deer to-day,
Though many dearer, in this bloody fray:
Embowell'd will I see thee by and by;
Till then, in blood by noble Percy lie.

The speech of Hotspur is material, and resembles Hamlet's on the like occasion. The reply of the prince is similar to Horatio's, when the two Danes exchange thoughts on death in the hour of its trial. No idea of a future state: both princes carry their thoughts towards ensuing political events, and others have to think of a heaven for them. Indeed, something of Hamlet is carried on in the rest of the speech of Prince Hal. Falstaff, on rising, says in joke what the duke, in Measure for Measure, says more seriously:—

To die is to be a counterfeit; for he is but the counterfeit of a man, who hath not the life of a man: but to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. He that rewards me, God reward him.

This must be said in irony of the expectation of reward from heaven, and from a belief that none comes from that quarter.

KING HENRY IV.—PART II.

FALSTAFF was a favourite with Shakspere, and from the queen and court down to the populace, said to be a favourite of the British nation. Yet the staple commodity of the wit of Shakspere's pet character was irreligion: he was, what the former companion of his impiety, King Henry V., told him —'a profane jester.' The king would have him think of a future state, and prepare for his end, and not turn it off with a jest, as he always had done.

When Northumberland hears of the death of his son, Hotspur, he says:—

> Now let not Nature's hand
> Keep the wild flood confin'd! let order die!
> And let this world no longer be a stage,
> To feed contention in a lingering act;
> But let one spirit of the first-born Cain
> Reign in all bosoms, that, each heart being set
> On bloody courses, the rude scene may end,
> And darkness be the burier of the dead!

This is a wish and a thought throughout irreligious, and materialistic. Shakspere has put the same sentiments into the mouths of several of his characters, when overpowered with a sense of their own mortality. Travers tells him:—

> This strained passion doth you wrong, my lord:—

which shows what interpretation Shakspere thought would be put upon it. Johnson would avert the meaning, especially the conclusion, which he has been combating elsewhere, and of which he here says:—'There is no need to suppose it exactly philosophical; darkness, in poetry, may be absence of eyes, as well as privation of light. Yet we may remark, that by an ancient opinion it has been held, that if the human

race, from whom the world was made, were extirpated, the whole system of sublunary nature would cease.' Criticism may be absence of sense, and blindness may be the determination not to see. Darkness has borne but one signification, though many times used by Shakspere. Falstaff calls the soul—

> The brain of this foolish—compounded clay, man;

and, referring to Scripture, he utters what so shocked the devout, seriously delivered, and returns to his old, and the worst, illustration of hell. On his page telling him that the clothier refused the security of Bardolph for the articles of dress he wanted, Falstaff says:—

> Let him be damned like the glutton! may his tongue be hotter!

The Chief Justice tells him he had sent for him to speak on 'matters against his life,' his exploits at Gadshill, and reminds him of his broken voice and other signs of age. He answers:—

> For my voice, I have lost it with hollaing and singing of anthems.

He says nothing of making the most of the remainder of his time, and providing for the life to come; but putting the fault of his misdemeanours as usual on the prince, he says he has:—

> Checked him [for giving the Chief Justice a box on the ear,] and the young lion repents, not in sackcloth and ashes, but in new silk and old sack.

On being told by the judge that the prince is separated from him, and that he has to march with another division of the army against the rebels, Falstaff says he has to thank him for that, and tells him to pray not for his soul, or even his life, but that:—'Marry, they may not have to fight on a hot day, as he has but two shirts to his back, and does not mean to sweat extraordinarily.'

When the hostess complains that she will have to pawn the tapestry of her dining rooms, he says:—

> A pretty slight drollery, or the story of the prodigal, is worth a thousand of these bed hangings, and these fly-bitten tapestries.

The parable of Jesus is put in fine juxta position with 'a pretty slight' drollery: indeed, he assimilates the divine author of the Christian religion with a Falstaff—a wine bibber and glutton.

Shakspere draws the prince as another Hamlet—one at perpetual war with himself: and now he is on the eve of reformation, which is working its way as much from pride as from religion. The prince (Act ii., scene 2) expresses to Poins the irritation he feels in being a prince, and in feeling weary and wanting 'small beer,' but more particularly in having cognizance of the companions, whose society he keeps, and all the vulgar matters belonging to them. Shakspere marks the gradation from this to a thought of heaven, natural to a man ill at ease, condemning himself for his faults, and thinking he ought, without any effort on his part, not only to be placed higher here than other men, but higher than himself hereafter. Shakspere cannot, however, help confuting, and putting whimsically the thought itself. 'God knows,' says the prince, concluding his speech on the follies and vices of Poins, 'whether the bastards he cloathes in the rags of his wardrobe will inherit his kingdom.' Then recurring to an idea before introduced, he adds—'but the midwives say the children are in the fault.' On Poins letting him know that he did not expect any improvement, he urges:—

> By this hand thou think'st me as far in the devil's books as thou and Falstaff, for obduracy and persistency. Let the end try the man.

On the page appearing with Bardolph, he says:—

> The boy that I gave Falstaff: he had him from me Christian; and look, if the fat villain have not transformed him ape.

From his practice and conversation the prince says:—

> Hath not the boy profited?

The prince asks after Falstaff.

> *Bardolph.* In bodily health, sir?
>
> *Poins.* Marry, the immortal part needs a physician: but that moves not him; though that be sick, it dies not.

What can be the point here, except to jest on the immor-

tality of the soul? They found a quibble upon it, to the effect that that which cannot die needs no physician, however sick it be. Falstaff concludes his letter to the prince:—

Repent at idle time as thou may'st, and so farewell.

P. Hen. Well, thus we play the fools with the time; and the spirits of the wise sit in the clouds and mock us.

This is a parallel remark to that of Pericles, Coriolanus, and others, on a scene of human misery—'the gods do laugh at us.' The prince showed, by carrying on a destructive and unjust war to evidence his repentance, that he thought those who do sit in the clouds are best pleased by witnessing our energies employed in wholesale crime and wide-spreading mischief. Household economy is with him the occupation of the vulgar, and social happiness the subject of contempt. The prince, from being an accomplice in a petty theft, was going to repent in robbery and slaughter, with all the appliances of a king. 'Fine times,' as Falstaff and his companions said, 'for such of them,' and for the commission of offences such as they mentioned—rape, robbery, and murder. The more serious lamented the same consequences of the war; and the Lord Chief Justice acknowledged to Falstaff that his occupation was gone as long as the war lasted; 'you may thank the unquiet time for your o'erposting that action.'

A room in the Boar's Head Tavern, in Eastcheap, presents as ever, Falstaff and his companions—women and the prince!

When Pistol, the hero of bombast, is recommended to quit the company at the pleasure of Doll Tearsheet, he says:

I'll see her damned first;—to Pluto's damned lake, to the infernal deep, with Erebus and tortures vile also. * * Damn them with King Cerberus. * * Die men, like dogs. * * Fear we broadsides? no, let the fiend give fire. * * Death rock me asleep, abridge my doleful days;—

amidst which declamation, Pistol is unceremoniously driven out by Falstaff. Falstaff praising his own valour, Doll says:—

Thou followed'st him like a church.

She asks him when he means to—

Leave off fighting o' days, and foining o' night, and begin to patch up his old body for heaven?



He answers:—

Peace, good Doll, do not speak like a death's head; do not bid me remember mine end.

Falstaff abuses the prince and Poins, who are in the disguises of waiters. On discovering themselves, and confronting the knight with his words, he declares it was no abuse of the prince:—

I dispraised him before the wicked, that the wicked might not fall in love with him.

The prince says, he wrongs the virtuous society present:—

Is Doll of the wicked? or is the boy of the wicked? or honest Bardolph, whose zeal burns in his nose, of the wicked?

Fal. **The fiend hath pricked down Bardolph irrecoverably; and his face is Lucifer's privy kitchen, where he doth nothing but roast malt worms. For the boy, there is a good angel about him; but the devil outbids him too.**

P. Hen. For the women.

Fal. **For one of them, she is in hell already, and burns, poor soul! For the other—I owe her money; and whether she be damned for that I know not.**

Host. No, I warrant you.

Fal. **No, I think thou art not; I think thou art quit for that. Marry, there is another indictment upon thee, for suffering flesh to be eaten in thy house, contrary to the law, for the which I think thou wilt howl.**

Host. All victuallers do so: what's a joint of mutton or two in a whole Lent?

Doll to P. Hen. What says your grace?

Fal. **His grace says that which his flesh rebels against.**

Grace is never introduced except to be laughed at. Shakspere assigns religion not only to the weakest, but the wickedest of his characters. They sometimes use it as a cover to their unbelief, and often in all sincerity join in it their iniquities. Henry IV. is represented by Shakspere as a perjured subject—a murderer and usurper, with a great deal of piety to sugar o'er the devil within and without. Pious sentiments are given to a king, such as Henry VI., who historically requires to be so treated, but Scriptures added to folly, and held up to contempt, eke out the characters.

Richard II., beginning with religion, is made an example of its inefficiency for both temporal support and spiritual comfort. Henry IV. is the type of a different description of inconsistency, professiug religious sentiments: he is more a man of the world than the others. Shakspere makes him talk religion and infidelity at the same time, and makes his observations the occasion of answering religion.

Having rebuked the 'dull god' which refused him sleep, Henry IV. thus delivers himself to Warwick :—

> O Heaven! that one might read the book of fate:
> And see the revolution of the times:
> Make mountains level, and the continent
> (Weary of solid firmness) melt itself
> Into the sea! and, other times, to see
> The beachy girdle of the ocean
> Too wide for Neptune's hips; how chances mock,
> And changes fill the cup of alteration
> With divers liquors! [O, if this were seen,
> The happiest youth—viewing his progress through,
> What perils past, what crosses to ensue—
> Would shut the book, and sit him down and die.]

It will be observed that the speech of Warwick, which occasioned the answer of the king, referred to a political event; and one would have supposed the remarks of the king would have been in unison with the subject of the conversation. Instead of which, after having expressed his wish to read the book of fate, and leaving it uncertain at first, by 'the revolution of the times,' what he meant, he indulges in an episode proper to a geological inquirer, and savouring of the theory of the materialist, with regard to the natural and not providential alteration in the globe. When he returns to politics, and makes them a consequence, as it were, of the preceding philosophical reflections, we do not see the connection except in that materialistic view of things, and necessitarian way of thinking, in which Shakspere so frequently indulges, and which involved all alike, physical and human effects, in the causes and operations of nature. We either see the unavoidable tendency of Shakspere's mind to drag in some of his own thoughts at the expense of situation and probability, or we must admit them so mixed up in his philosophy as not to be divided.

When the king does return to the consideration of Northumberland's rebellion, he remembers the words of Richard, which proved a prophecy—that he would ascend the throne to which, Henry observes, he was compelled by necessity through the means of Northumberland, who would fall from Henry, as he had done from Richard. The occasion Shakspere seizes to explain away prophecy, in the way which rationalists do, and continues his essay on the course of nature and the law of necessity, in words and sentiments savouring strongly of having read Lucretius on the 'nature of things.' We have already mentioned one instance to the point, and shall have other passages to give, similar to the one Warwick delivers, which seem to prove that Shakspere must have drawn some of his philosophy from the poet of atheism. Warwick says:—

> There is a history in all men's lives,
> Figuring the nature of the times deceas'd:
> The which observ'd, a man may prophesy
> With a near aim, of the main chance of things
> As yet not come to life; which in their seeds,
> And weak beginnings, lie intreasured.
> Such things become the hatch and brood of time;
> And, by the necessary form of this,
> King Richard might create a perfect guess,
> That great Northumberland, then false to him,
> Would, of that seed, grow to a greater falseness;
> Which should not find a ground to root upon,
> Unless on you.
>
> *K. Hen.* Are these things, then, necessities?
> Then let us meet them like necessities.

Here we have Lucretius' seeds, and the natural history of creation. Warwick calls a circumstance relating to a man's life, 'a necessary form,' and would seem to insinuate that Northumberland acted from necessity. Warwick, as well as Hotspur, proceed by induction.

From this system of nature seems to follow the system of morals, as explained by Hobbes, Hume, and other materialists who have written on the law of necessity. The king had already talked of fate, chance, and necessity—anything but God; and when he mentions prophecy, he is persuaded by Warwick that it comes under the law of ne-

cessity, and he will not give way to a fear of it, but will meet it as he had met other necessities. This reminds us of Macbeth cowed by prophecies, yet fighting against necessity. We have mentioned Glendower o'erruled by prophecies to his destruction; and we shall have the legate Pandulph pretending to prophecy what was easy to foresee politically.

Fable, when pricked as a recruit, comes out in the style of Hamlet and Julius Cæsar on death:—

I care not;—a man can die but once; we owe a death;—if it be my destiny so; if it be not so, let it go which way it will; he that dies this year, is quit for the next.

Falstaff adopts Hobbes's idea of the law of nature and morality, as well as necessity—a doctrine of things which Shakspere seems strongly inclined to, as we have before observed.

Falstaff, intending to make a prey of Shallow, says:—

If the young dace be a bait for the old pike, I see no reason in the law of nature, but I may snap at him. Let time shape, and there's an end.

In Act iii., Falstaff says of this Shallow:—

How subject we old men are to this vice of lying.

A painful want of sincerity between man and man, father and son, is shown on the occasion of the Prince stealing the king's crown; and the duplicity of his apology is rendered doubly disgusting by the introduction of religion, which in some way or other is made accessory to every villany past, present, and to come. Johnson, commenting on the ejection of some lines by Warburton, expresses his contempt, which the known sincerity of the doctor made him feel for the conduct of these two religious rogues. His words are—'Who can determine what, so capricious a writer as our poet, might either deliberately or wantonly produce? The line is indeed such as disgraces a few that precede and follow it, but it suits well enough with the style of another; and the answer which the prince makes, and which is applauded by the king for wisdom, is not of a strain much higher than this ejected line.' The father recommends the prince to do what he had done, cut off his enemies. He had intended to lead more to destruction, and, at the same

time, reconcile his own guilt to his conscience and his God by conducting them to a crusade; 'a journey which,' Johnson says, 'had two motives, religion and policy.' He durst not wear the ill gotten crown without expiation; but in the act of expiation he contrives to make his wickedness successful. Upon this avowal, on his death-bed, of guilt past and intended, and begging God to forgive him, Johnson justly observes—'He prays for the prosperity of guilt, while he deprecates its punishment.'

We know not whether it occurred to the irreligious mind of Shakspere, but he makes Harry, on his accession to the throne, conduct himself, in words and works, somewhat as Jesus Christ said he would do when he came into the possession of his kingdom at the day of judgment. As the reader knows, Falstaff, and all the old companions of the prince, are waiting to be acknowledged when the trumpet, as the last trump, sounds to announce the presence of the dread king. On their recognising him as usual, and Falstaff calling him his 'Jove,' the king answers, 'I know thee not,' which it will be recollected are the words Jesus is to use to those who claim acquaintance with him in heaven, on the score of having been admitted to be his greatest friends upon earth.

But intending, as our author did, to make the king serious on an occasion when of all others he ought to be—when preaching to his former companions, and showing to his courtiers his own reformation, Shakspere could not, directly he touched upon religion, refrain from jesting, particularly on those solemn subjects, grace and the grave.

KING JOHN.

KING JOHN, the enemy of the church, of God, and man, is made to announce himself as God's 'wrathful agent:'—

> Peace be to France; if France in peace permit
> Our just and lineal entrance to our own!
> If not; bleed France, and peace ascend to heaven!
> Whiles we, God's wrathful agent, do correct
> Their proud contempt, that beat his peace to heaven.

The ensuing dialogues between Constance and Elinor are much of the same nature as those between the women in Richard III. In her turn, Constance calls upon heaven for vengeance against John. Seeing the tears of Arthur, she exclaims:—

> Those heaven-moving pearls from his poor eyes,
> Which heaven shall take in nature of a fee;
> Ay, with these crystal beads heaven shall be brib'd
> To do him justice, and revenge on you.
>
> *Eli.* Thou monstrous slanderer of heaven and earth!
>
> *Const.* Thou monstrous injurer of heaven and earth!
> Call not me slanderer.

If Constance was a slanderer, might not something of the kind apply to Shakspere, who is always using God's name in vain as executor of vengeance upon earth—seldom, if ever, to fulfil his promised peace and goodwill? Constance is represented as fond of divinity—making subtle arguments out of it against her enemies, and uttering her own convictions in the spirit of disbelief. When Elinor accuses her of slandering heaven, she appeals to the commandment which punishes the sins of the parent upon the posterity—of the grandmother Elinor upon the grandson Arthur. It is here

introduced by way of reproach to Elinor, and in such a manner as to reflect upon the commandment little credit.

The innocent Arthur only wishes for the grave to end him and this contest. The Bastard's speech upon the reconciliation between France and England is as full of satire on the effects of interest and the powerlessness of religion, as any of Timon's upon money. He says:—

> And France (whose armour conscience buckled on;
> Whom zeal and charity brought to the field,
> As God's own soldier), rounded in the ear
> With that same purpose-changer, that sly-devil;
> That broker, that still breaks the pate of faith;
> That daily break-vow.—
> Since kings break faith upon commodity,
> Gain, be my lord! for I will worship thee.

By commodity is meant the king's interest; but it is impious to advocate the sacrificing of all considerations to wealth. To celebrate this violation of faith, we have a passage borrowed from Joshua. King Philip says:—

> To solemnize this day, the glorious sun
> Stays in his course.

The 'commodity' upon which the king based this miracle did not take place. The reverse of a festival occurred—battle, murder, and sudden death, and a mother weeping for her child, made the day to mourn. Constance says:—

> This day all things begun come to ill end;
> Yea, faith itself to hollow falsehood change!

This might be truly spoken of it, but it was not pious to pray for such an event on every return of the day:—

> Arm, arm, ye heavens, against these perjur'd kings:
> A widow cries, be husband to me, heavens!
> Let not the hours of this ungodly day
> Wear out the day in peace; but, ere sunset,
> Set armed discord 'twixt these perjur'd kings.
> Hear me, O, hear me.

Pandulph enters, and addresses the two kings as 'anointed deputies of heaven.' The answer of John to the legate shows Shakspere no Roman Catholic, and would be applauded to the echo by the audience of the theatre and the

occupants of the throne of England. Though in character, and in the mouth of a villain, we must allow that Shakspere spoke here in his own person, and that he uttered the sentiments of England.

John says he sets all reverence apart :—

> All reverence set apart,
> To him, and his usurp'd authority,

which means, we suppose, take it away from the Pope. Philip says :—

> Brother of England, you blaspheme in this,

which may further help us to a right meaning of reverence and blasphemy. John calls the influence of Rome juggling witchcraft, which must be meant for its practices in religion. This, and the answer of the Legate making meritorious John's assassination, must have been intended to gratify the feelings of the audience, this crime being charged against the Pope by Elizabeth and James. Constance says, what must have been intended as irony by Shakspere. She tells Pandulph to say amen to her curses, for she had wrong on her side, as much as to say he had not :—

> *Pand.* There's law and warrant, lady, for my curse.

Constance says of Elinor :—

> Look to that, devil ! lest that France repent,
> And, by disjoining hands, hell lose a soul.

She then declares to Lewis that the devil tempts him in his choice between the friendship of England and the curse of Rome :—

> Lewis, stand fast; the devil tempts thee here
> In likeness of a new and untrimmed bride.
> *Blanch.* The Lady Constance speaks not from her faith,
> But from her need.
> *Const.* Oh, if thou grant my need,
> Which only lives but by the death of faith,
> That need must needs infer this principle,
> That faith would live again by death of need :
> O, then tread down my need, and faith mounts up;
> Keep my need up, and faith is trodden down.

She here avows she has no faith, which will be seen in the

sequel—and a principle more sceptical was never avowed than that faith and religion are only co-existent with interest. Religion is represented to be the consolation of the afflicted, but Shakspere works out the opposite principle throughout his plays. Religion is not thought of in adversity, except as a means of vengeance. Mr. Knight talks of a keystone to each of Shakspere's plays, and we think we have given enough to show that the impotence of faith, religion, and oaths, are the ruling ideas of King John. Religion sets morality aside, makes right wrong, and wrong right. Of these perversions we shall have many more to point out in this play.

The Jesuitical casuistry of Pandulph, that no vows are to be kept except the vow to the church, is only produced to gain the derisive applause of the audience, and accommodate the temper of the times. Johnson has remarked:—'This must have been, at the time it was written—in our struggles of Popery—a very captivating scene. So many passages remain, in which Shakspere evidently takes advantage of the facts then recent, and of the passions then in motion.' Shakspere wrote also to elucidate his own principles. The opinions enunciated by Constance are, we think, dragged in; or why should one of two females, in midst of love and spite, indulge in deep drawn philosophy, which it requires a little patient attention to understand?

The avowed infidel, the bastard, says of the future, upon which they are so fiercely debating:—

> Old Time the clock-setter, that bald sexton Time,
> Is it as he will? well then, France shall rue.

If spoken of a Providence it would be irreverential, but after speaking of the forethought of heaven, it is triumphantly pointing to time as the disposer of events. King John sends him as a fit person to England to ransack the church. The Bastard answers:—

> Bell, book, and candle, shall not drive me back,
> When gold and silver becks me to come on.
> I leave your highness:—Grandame, I will pray
> (If ever I remember to be holy)
> For your fair safety; so I kiss your hand.

Constance, who acknowledges her faith to be the force of necessity, has lost her boy, Arthur. On her entrance, Shakspere puts into the mouth of King Philip of France, one of the ordinary villains of the world, the cant of religion, to suit the situation of her who has been made the sacrifice of his policy :—

> Look who comes here! a grave unto a soul;
> Holding the eternal spirit against her will,
> In the vile prison of afflicted breath :—
> I prithee, lady, go away with me.

When the crafty and designing have no further occasion for the lives of their tools, and their best service would be their death, they recommend them to the hope of another life. In answer to Philip's exhortation to patience, Constance responds in no religious tone :—

> No, I defy all counsel and redress,
> But that which ends all counsel, true redress,
> Death, death, O amiable, lovely death!
> Thou odoriferous stench! sound rottenness!
> Arise forth from thy couch of lasting night,
> Thou hate and terror to prosperity;
> And I will kiss thy detestable bones,
> And put my eye-balls in thy vaulty brows;
> And ring these fingers with thy household worms;
> And stop this gap of death with fulsome dust,
> And be a carrion monster, like thyself:
> Come grin on me, and I will think thou smil'st,
> And buss thee as thy wife! Misery's love,
> O come to me!

The legate, Cardinal Pandulph, declares she utters madness—the usual way of dealing with irreligion. So she could forget herself, she says she would she were mad, and then remarks :—

> Preach some philosophy to make me mad
> And thou shalt be canoniz'd, Cardinal :—

from which, it may be inferred, that Shakspere intended to convey, that what she had said regarding death was not madness, but philosophy. This interpretation becomes the more apparent when she says :—

> For, being not mad, but sensible of grief,
> My reasonable part produces reason
> How I may be deliver'd of these woes,
> And teaches me to kill or hang myself.

All Christian consolation, and hope of redress hereafter, she throws to the winds, and trusts in nothing but that which ends all—death. She draws the most material picture of death, praises it, and vows she will love it as a husband—as Claudio and Antony—and will meet it as a bride. Her language is the opposite of Philip's counsel. Instead of thinking of her soul as being in the grave of a living body, and the release by death of her eternal spirit from a vile and temporary prison, she wishes to hurry to an end, and commit herself to lasting night :—

> And, father cardinal, I have heard you say,
> That we shall see and know our friends in heaven:
> If that be true, I shall see my boy again;
> For, since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
> To him that did but yesterday suspire,
> There was not such a gracious creature born.
> But now will canker sorrow eat my bud,
> And chase the native beauty from his cheek,
> And he will look as hollow as a ghost;
> As dim and meagre as an ague's fit;
> And so he'll die; and, rising so again,
> When I shall meet him in the court of heaven,
> I shall not know him: therefore never, never
> Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.

The cardinal holds that she entertains too heinous a respect of grief. Similar views are metaphysically developed in the diary of Sir James Mackintosh: when, struck by the physical certainty of death, and not led away by the eloquence of imagination, he admits the correctness of those materialistic views which recognise no future life.

No sooner is she gone, than the calamity of Constance is speculated upon by the priest as a political profit.

Pandulph congratulates the French king upon the prospect of John's crimes, as events most likely to favour their projects, and delivers himself as Cicero did to Cæsar, Edmund to Gloucester, Hotspur to Glendower—that all providential inferences from the marked events of nature are aberrations of reason, and that these deceptions of faith, natural to the vulgar, serve the profit of the wise :—

> No natural exhalation in the sky,
> No 'scape of nature, no distemper'd day,
> No common wind, no customed event,

> But they will pluck away his natural cause,
> And call them meteors, prodigies, and signs,
> Abortives, presages, and tongues of heaven,
> Plainly denouncing vengeance upon John.

The moral of Shakspere may be in Faulconbridge, as in the Edmund of Lear, that our vices visit us. Here was the child of illegitimacy, who conspired against his father's family, and was willing to make war against God or man to make good his own fortunes. The fourth Act gives a moral scene; paints love instinctive in human nature. Arthur says to Hubert:—

> Is it my fault that I was Geffrey's son?
> Indeed it is not: and I would to heaven
> I were your son, so you would love me, Hubert.
> *Hub.* If I talk to him, with his innocent prate,
> He will awake my mercy, which lies dead;
> Therefore I will be sudden, and dispatch.

There is no religion put in the mouth of the child, except in the way of reproach:—

> If heaven be pleas'd that you must use me ill,
> Why then you must.

Hubert introduces Shakspere's religious plea for murderers—his oath to do it. It was unnecessary for the child, after this doubt of the will of heaven, to state that if an angel should have come to him and told him that Hubert would put out his eyes, he would have believed no tongue but Hubert's—meaning, that in the only way which Providence has taken to show his special will to mankind, he would not have believed; he would rather trust to man. How different from the case in the Bible, where Abraham, when told to sacrifice his son, prepares accordingly: but Shakspere puts in the mouth of the boy that he would not believe in God; under these circumstances he would not trust the issue to God, but only to man. The issue is, the moral of Shakspere—that natural feeling prevails, and, spite of his oath, Hubert does not fulfil his religious obligations.

The death of the prophet on the day on which he prophecied John's loss of his crown, is a circumstance which it would please Shakspere to introduce. The prodigies which appear, fulfil the philosophy which has been ex-



pounded by Pandulph and others. Shakspere, in his early poem of Venus and Adonis, had said that they only influenced 'the world's poor people.'

Hubert may be said to tell a lie, in declaring he never thought of killing Arthur, as he certainly was, according to his own confession, prepared to put out his eyes. The boy's exclamation is, as usual, accompanied with Shakspere's irreverence:—

> Oh me! my uncle's spirit is in these stones:
> Heaven take my soul, and England keep my bones!

Salisbury makes a vow of revenge, when he sees the dead body of the boy. He will never cease—

> Till I have set a glory to this hand,
> By giving it the worship of revenge.
> *Pemb. Bigot.* Our souls religiously confirm thy words.

Faulconbridge, who is ready to fight in defence of Hubert, and likens himself to the devil, yet threatens Hubert with all the terrors of damnation if he has put young Arthur to death.

Sick, and, apparently, conscience-stricken, the weak and wicked John makes terms with the Pope, which were to hold him up to the scorn of Shakspere's audience. The nobles take the Sacrament to pledge their faiths inviolable to the Dauphin, which they, strongly declaring their resolution never to break, immediately violate. Pandulph enters, and Lewis will have it an angel spake in his presence, coming to set on their actions the name of right with holy breath. The irony of which may be well understood, when the legate comes to command the French forces to withdraw, John having made his peace with heaven. Shakspere, before in this play, had introduced Chatillon as a miracle, to bring news—the reverse of the expectation of Philip and Constance. Shakspere must have had in these instances his usual design of particularly ridiculing these special interpositions, as they were thought, or claimed to be, of providential agency. Lewis does not care for his faith, when it stands in the way of his interest. The warrant from the hand of heaven, the honoured messenger of advantage, is rudely handled when he comes on a different errand. The incident of a monk

poisoning the king would be gladly seized upon by Shakspere, who was certainly no lover of priests, Protestant or Roman Catholic, unless made to talk philosophically. He followed the injunction of Hume, of whatever politics you are, oppose them under every form. The Bastard, supposing all is lost, which is not the case, tells heaven not to tempt them to bear above their power, that he will serve John in heaven, as he has done on earth, (when he has satisfied his revenge); and he addresses the nobles to accompany him. John shows no repentance, no hope of heaven, or pardon for his sins, and his last words are material :—

> And then all this thou seest is but a clod,
> And module of confounded royalty.

Johnson remarks, Faulconbridge is distinguished by the levity which Shakspere delighted to exhibit.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

Hazlitt says, 'The story of "All's Well that Ends Well," and several others of Shakspere's plays, is taken from Boccaccio,' to whom, he says, 'justice has not been done by the world, on account of his obnoxious attacks on the monks.' Boccaccio was a writer in the fourteenth century. Hallam acknowledges him to have been the first in whom he has found a public expression of infidelity to the Christian religion. To ridiculing the offices and professors of religion, he was inclined by a disbelief in the whole of it. So was the dramatist in copying those particulars of the novelist, and also in making his characters express more positively than Boccaccio's did, their infidelity, and indifference to all religions. Hallam writes, of the literature of Europe from 1400 to 1440, 'among other causes, the extreme superstition of the popular creed could not but engender a secret tendency towards infidelity, the course of which may be traced with ease in the writings of those ages. Thus the tale of the three rings in Boccaccio, whether original or not, may be reckoned among the sports of a sceptical philosophy.'

Knight says, 'the main incidents of the story are the same as Boccaccio's, the management, by the intervention of the comic characters, belongs to Shakspere.' It is this very management and introduction of these comic characters which makes Shakspere, in his satire, resemble Boccaccio, as he was indebted to him for the sentiment and plot of this play. It is allowed by Knight, that 'the fool is a vehicle of some biting satire.' There are allusions to religion and the religions of the times, which he and all other commentators have explained. Parolles, according to Knight, is full of impertinent common-places on the subject. Shakspere certainly does not make his clown, or, as we think, any of these

common characters, compliment religion by their conversation: whenever the clown enters, and begins some enigmatical discourse, the reader may be sure the joke will find some vent in religion. This may be observed of Falstaff and others. It will be our task further to show the tendency of such remarks.

The Countess and Lafeu carry on a conversation on life and death, much more material than spiritual. On Bertram's departure the Countess gives him her blessing, and some moral advice. In it Shakspere proves himself equal to any moral lawgiver in laying down rules for the conduct in life, which surpass all of human derivation:—

> Love all, trust a few,
> Do wrong to none: be able for thine enemy
> Rather in power, than use.

Shakspere wished to obviate in this remodelling the too literal fulfilment of Christ's words; and taking as his basis the doctrine of love to be found in the New Testament, he thought to form an original moral code, which might improve as well as amplify and extend all those human and divine systems which had gone before.

Helena's conversation with Parolles is not very decent, and is throughout very material. He parts with this advice:—'When thou hast leisure, say thy prayers'—implying that nothing-to-do women turn to religion.

Throughout this play, with a slight and doubtful exception, argument is given to opinion against the religious side, whilst religion itself is assailed with ridicule; and we shall have occasions to show that 'All's Well that Ends Well,' perhaps more than any other play, makes a mockery of religion. Helena says:—

> Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
> Which we ascribe to Heaven. The fated sky
> Gives us free scope; only doth backward pull
> Our slow designs, when we ourselves are dull.

Helena has a remedy left her by her father, a famous physician, which she wishes the King of France to try for a supposed incurable disorder, and on this turns much of the religious discussion. In the beginning of the consideration

of the assistance vouchsafed by God to man, we have the sentiments of Edmund, in Lear, stated with the modesty natural to woman, and put generally, not universally. Edmund's remarks might be applied only to religious astronomy—this was spoken of heaven and religion. Edmund thought heaven had nothing to do with man for evil, and Helena insinuated Providence had less than is supposed to do with man for good; the finger of God was little to be foreseen or felt in punishments or rewards, in corrections or assistance shown to mankind. The idea of heaven in action pulling back, is only a poetical figure to express the idea that those who depend on divine Providence, and do not themselves press forward without regard to it, are left behind, and are farther off their objects than they ever were. Helena goes on to say:—

> What power is it which mounts my love so high,
> That makes me see, and cannot feed mine eye?

That is to say, if there be a power that can do one thing, it ought to do the other; if it gives desires, it ought to grant satisfaction. Having thus inquired, doubtingly, whether there be any Providence, or any power, instigating and completing in such affairs as love, and having previously assigned their resolves to ourselves, she gives a materialist's view of nature—as the only hope that it may agree in particulars, as it does in generals:—

> The mightiest space in fortune nature brings
> To join like likes; and kiss like native things.
> Impossible be strange attempts to those
> That weigh their pain in sense, and do suppose
> What hath been cannot be.

The expression of such a sentiment would do for a motto to the 'Vestiges of the History of Creation,' the theory that all present existence is the work of former combinations of matter, and what has once happened in nature is taking place, and will perpetually recur.

Knight, in pointing out a palpable paraphrase of the Church Service, and admitting its irreverence, founds a paradoxical argument upon it in favour of Shakspere's reverence of religion, supporting it by the assertion of the *infre-*

quency of passages bearing traces of a religious origin. We think this work will, in a great measure, demonstrate this egregious mistake.

The king, speaking of Bertram's father, says:—

> His plausive words
> He scatter'd not in ears, but grafted them
> To grow there, and to bear.

'Of course from the collect in the Liturgy,' says Knight. 'Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words we have heard this day with our outward ears may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth the fruit of good living.' 'But it is noticeable that Shakspere's reverential mind very seldom adopted the phraseology of Scripture or prayer, for the mere sake of ornamenting his diction, as moderns perpetually do.' We should like to know who they are? Excepting in works professedly religious, we never observed the habit. Certainly Shakspere did not often do it for the purpose stated. In the mouths of comic characters, introduced for the sake of contradiction or reprobation, or in situations ridiculous and pitiable, the mention of sacred subjects commanding our reverence, betrays no very reverential mind, and was not done for the sake of ornament. Had we observed this passage before Mr. Knight pointed out its abstraction from the collect, we should not have thought of citing it as a mark of irreverence; but Mr. Knight, in apologising for it, gives proof of what we are establishing. An article in the 'Quarterly Review,' on Eothen, seems to accuse the author of infidelity, because he ekes out his expressions in no very reverential manner from the services of religion. Is this one of Mr. Knight's modern instances, because it involves Shakspere in the same guilt of infidelity? and if Eothen be a proof of the state of the mind of the author, much more are Shakspere's plays. Mr. Knight continues—'The passage noted is an exception, but such are very rare. Doubts have been entertained as to Shakspere's religious belief, because few or no notices of it occur in his works. This ought to be attributed to a tender and delicate reserve about holy things, rather than inattention or neglect. It is not he who talks most about Scripture, or who most frequently adopts its

phraseology, who most deeply feels it.' Here is an admission at the commencement of a strong suspicion: here is a negative proof given, that Shakspere entertained no religious belief. Mr. Knight would argue from it the contrary; but is not ridicule, we could say abuse, and argument employed against religion, an overwhelming and affirmative probability of Shakspere's infidelity? Had he introduced Scripture and religious phraseology for the sake of ornament, when his characters and situations were serious, we should have found a difficulty in overcoming the arguments that Shakspere was deeply imbued with religious feeling, which showed itself on every suitable occasion; but the plain contrary is the fact: the whole weight of argument and probability tend to the conviction that Shakspere had deficient religious reverence or sentiment. 'He who has no reserve about holy things, cannot care about them,' would be the converse of Mr. Knight's supposition, and would be truth without paradox. He who talks about Scripture, and adopts its phraseology to reason against and ridicule it, cannot have a very deep feeling of religion.

Dr. Arnold has said, that the state of that person's mind was past recovery, and he gave him up as a pupil, who treated sacred subjects with levity.

It is curious this assertion of Shakspere's reverential mind should come from an editor who has suppressed the oaths of Shakspere; as rather injuring his hypothesis of Shakspere's reverence for religion—his delicacy and reserve as to holy things. How came Dr. Johnson to be shocked at these expressions, as well as indignant at the serious impiety of Shakspere? Johnson may be granted to be as good a judge 'of the manner' of Shakspere, though perhaps not so good a critic of his poetry, as Mr. Knight.

What could Mr. Knight be thinking of when he told us that Shakspere very seldom paraphrased scriptural language for his own purposes? A host of critics have insisted on the existence of such parodies, and not a few have seen and told the irreverence with which he used them. So recently as 1843, a work was published under this title—'Religious and Moral Sentences from Shakspere, compared with Sacred Passages drawn from Holy Writ'—'Dedicated to the Shak-



sperian Society, by a Member.' The plan of the work is to take passages from Shakspere, and present opposite to them the texts of Scripture, from which the author supposes Shakspere drew his information, and which he thinks indicate Shakspere's belief in them. In this latter respect the author as signally fails as Mr. Knight does—but that he establishes Shakspere's extensive freedoms with holy writ is not to be questioned. But to return to our play.

Shakspere generally makes his clowns speak wisdom, when wise men talk folly. They are all, more or less, what the French call *esprits forts*—strong minds—blasphemers. As 'All's Well that Ends Well' exceeds, in some respects, other plays, so we think its Clown surpasses other clowns in impiety. Knight, when he comes to this clown, says of the characters in general, 'He (Shakspere) infused into them his wit and his philosophy, without taking them out of the condition of realities.' They are the interpreters of the multitude of many things that would otherwise 'lie too deep for words.' So there is an esoteric as well as an exoteric language to be understood by the people, when the times do not allow freedom of speech, and Shakspere was one of those who meant more than he said.

The Countess, on seeing the Clown, makes an apology for him, which continually runs through the play. It cannot be said that Shakspere did this, as not approving of what he put in his mouth; it is evident in this, as in other similar cases, on which side the dialogue is directed. The Countess is merely the necessary foil for the point of the Clown's wit, and a slight veil thrown over the intentions of the author, by way of escape from prosecution and suppression. She says:—

> What does this knave here? Get you gone, sirrah. The complaints I have heard of you, I do not all believe; 'tis my slowness that I do not; for, I know, you lack not the folly to commit them, and have ability enough to make such knaveries yours.
>
> *Clo.* 'Tis not unknown to you, madam, I am a poor fellow.
>
> *Count.* Well, sir.
>
> *Clo.* No, madam, 'tis not so well that I am poor, though many of the rich are damned.

This point, made by the clown, is based on the morality and doctrine of Jesus in the sermon on themount, his

Jesus said, blessed are the poor, woe unto the rich, and, in other places, assigns salvation to the poor, damnation to the rich, and leaves us to infer that the disproportion which wealth makes between us in this world will be reversed by the justice of the world to come. In another place the Clown continues this joke on those who are well off in this world going to hell in the next, and 'poor fellows,' like himself, being sure of heaven :—

I think, I shall never have the blessing of God, till I have issue o' my body; for, they say, barnes are blessings.

After repudiating the blessing upon the poor, he makes the blessing of God a play upon words. The Countess asks him his reason for wishing to marry, which introduces another irreligious sally :—

My poor body, madam, requires it; I am driven on by the flesh, and he must needs go that the devil drives.

Not content with this, the Countess asks for other reasons, and the Clown gives such reasons as were the objects of her inquiry :—

Faith, madam, I have other holy reasons, such as they are.

Count. May the world know them?

Clo. I have been, madam, a wicked creature, as you and all flesh and blood are; and, indeed, I do marry, that I may repent.

Here sin, repentance, and the flesh, in addition to the flesh and the devil before, are made the subjects of ridicule. After continuing in a style merely indecent, he concludes with a reflection dragged in on the differences in religion :—

If men could be contented to be what they are, there were no fea in marriage for young Charbon, the Puritan, and old Poysam, the Papist, howsome'er their hearts are severed in religion, their heade are both one—they may jowl horns together, like any deer in the herd.

Count. Wilt thou ever be a foul-mouth'd and calumnious knave?

Here is the character of the fool, such as Shakspere intended, and 'calumnious' answers to what he elsewhere points out as blasphemous and profane. The Clown afterwards sings a couplet to the effect, that 'marriage comes by destiny.' At the mention of Helen, he proceeds to some song about one good woman in ten :—

Count. What one good woman in ten? you corrupt the song, sirrah.

Clo. One good woman in ten, madam; which is a purifying o' the song. Would God would serve the world so all the year! we'd find no fault with the tithe woman, if I were the parson. One in ten, quoth a'! an we might have a good woman born but for every blazing star, or at an earthquake, 'twould mend the lottery well; a man may draw his heart out, ere he pluck one.

The Clown lessens the number of good to make it an exception, upon which he can hang his irreligious wit, and which he, by way of irony, calls a 'purifying of the song.' The whole seems to have been suggested by the dialogue in the Scripture between Lot and the Deity, where a certain number of good in so many bad are to save a city. The next reflection is an offence to God, recommending him to serve the world better with women, and can only come from one who believes merely in destiny. The same impious observation concerning God and the making of woman is repeated in another play, where it is said the devil does great injustice to God by marring them in the making. Tithes, and the 'parson next,' come in for a laugh, with a rather indecent avowal of what he would do were he in the situation of a parson, and his determination throws a suspicion upon the holy order. He would 'wear the surplice of humility over the black gown of a big heart.' Birth is all a lottery. He avows the same of bad and good, only there are so few prizes, that in the drawing a man may draw his heart out before he draws one.

Having stamped the character of Helena, Shakspere pays no great compliment to Scripture, when finding the king unwilling to try her remedy, as a natural one, quotes Matthew's gospel, ch. xi., v. 25, the words of Christ, in the following rather doggrel rhymes:—

> He that of greatest works is finisher,
> Oft does them by the weakest minister:
> So holy writ in babes hath judgment shown,
> When judges have been babes.

As proofs of miracles to those who denied them, she gives examples of the rock of waters and the drying up of the Red Sea:—



> Great floods have flown
> From simple sources; and great seas have dried,
> When miracles have by the greatest been denied.

We suppose that Pharaoh, and other sceptics, are meant by the 'greatest,' though Johnson says he does not see the purport of the line. Much more difficult does it appear to understand the next speech of Helena, where Shakspere seems labouring to reconcile the human means and experience he has so much exalted, with the assistance of heaven:—

> Inspired merit so by breath is barr'd:
> It is not so with Him that all things knows,
> As 'tis with us that square our guess by shows:
> But most it is presumption in us, when
> The help of heaven we count the act of men.
> Dear sir, of my endeavours give consent:
> Of heaven, not me, make an experiment.

How different from the lofty language which Shakspere assigned to reason in the mouth of Helena! Rationalism seems natural to Shakspere, and he uses it whenever he possibly can. It is an alternative when he has recourse to religion, which to him appeared but another name for the prejudices of mankind. Such tasks sat awkwardly upon him, and seem only executed to carry on the action of his plays. Preliminary to the experiment on the king, a scene is given between the Countess and the Clown, which, considering its situation between a trial of Providence and the occurrence of the event, ridiculed as a miracle, seems introduced to turn into derision, calling upon the Lord and trusting to Providence.

The Countess having occasion to send the Clown to court, he commences a series of profane ejaculations of O Lord! O Lord! O Lord! which he is pleased to declare an 'answer to all questions.' He further explains the convenience of this reply, by reference to a 'barber's block, which fits all buttocks.' 'It will do for a duke, or a constable,' he continues, 'high or low, any men having authority.' She remarks, such an answer must be of monstrous size:—

Clo. But a trifle neither, in good faith, if the learned should speak truth of it.

It only requires the better instructed, he would appear to

mean, to expose its absurdity. The Countess puts several to him, to which he only answers, 'O Lord, sir,' till saying to him, 'You were lately whipped;' and he answering, 'O Lord, sir,' she adds:—

> Indeed your O Lord, sir, is very sequent to your whipping; you would answer very well to a whipping if you were but bound to 't.
>
> *Clo.* I never had worse luck in my life, in my O Lord, sir.

He, however, is of opinion that it did not serve him very well on trial, as she remarks:—

> I see things may serve long, but not serve ever.

Can there be a doubt that Shakspere meant to ridicule the belief and expression of the Puritans of the times? It appears, from a note in Knight's edition, that 'the whipping of a domestic fool was not an uncommon occurrence. Sir Dudley Carleton writes to Mr. Winwood, in 1604—"There was great execution done lately upon Stone, *the fool*, who was well whipped in Bridewell for a *blasphemous speech*."' This man was no doubt punished as an example to others. It is probable that the fools of those times were addicted to this practice, which taught Shakspere that liberty of speech in them would excite less surprise than in persons of respectable station. And as clowns were little tolerated in such freedoms, Shakspere must have been in love with his opinions, to have put them forward under this disadvantage.

It is an acknowledgment of the profaneness of the dialogue, and the tender ground on which Shakspere stood, when, as we have said, the Countess herself is obliged to apologise for the license of the Clown, and over and over again give him hard names, which some critics will suppose a sufficient indication of the faith of Shakspere. We have only to say, that such an inference was never drawn from the introduction of infidelity before; and such a slight veil thrown over an author's intentions was not deemed sufficient when a Hume expressly declares his non-participation in the sentiments of unbelief he gives to the characters in his dialogues.

We have still further evidence of this spirit of irreligious raillery, in the satirical dialogue of Lafeu and Parolles, on

miracles. Lafeu is an old courtier; Parolles, as his name implies, is a man of words—a boaster, a 'notorious liar'—pious and impious, according to circumstances (intended by Shakspere sometimes, we think, for a caricature of a Puritan), a pretender to everything, and good for nothing. The remedy of Helena, which had effected the cure of the king, appears to Lafeu a miracle, which is to be ascribed to heaven, and for which heaven is to be thanked:—

Laf. They say, miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar things, supernatural and causeless. Hence is it, that we make trifles of terrors: ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.

It is impossible to suppose that Shakspere did not intend to convey in this speech a satire upon religion, and praise of philosophy. He has here probably delivered the opinion of the free-thinkers of his own days, as of the rationalists of our times, not only that miracles were 'antique fables,' but that all the ordinary and extraordinary events in the course of nature and existence were not to be attributed to a special Providence, or a scheme of divine dispensation. This speech of Lafeu expresses an inversion of facts. He could not mean that the 'philosophical' really saw, in modern and familiar things, anything 'supernatural.' A Providence they saw in the cause of nature, but supernaturalism only in especial revelations. We think Shakspere may have introduced the above confusion of terms on purpose to defend his philosophical friends from a charge made against them of believing in chance. If they did imagine all things to be produced by chance, the result would be most supernatural. Hume, and other atheistical writers, had afterwards to defend themselves against the charge of supposing things were effected by chance; and we think Shakspere made an old man talk and betray his ignorance on a subject he knew nothing about, in order to throw early ridicule on the accusers and the accusation.

After having stated the question so as to prejudge it, Shakspere makes Lafeu draw conclusions from it in favour of atheism—not only ascribing to knowledge the indifference felt for the judgment of heaven and the terrors of revelation,

but attributing the veneration of a superior being, and dependence on Providence, to ignorance and fear, which he makes Lafeu recommend to the worship and obedience of believers. That everything is unknown with regard to powers in heaven, is the objection which Shakspere perpetually makes to believers in these opinions, showing that he thought there was no argument for them, and that he paid no regard to revelation which had settled these questions. Though the cure of the king was not a terror, but a blessing, yet Shakspere returns to his former charge. In the recommendation of Lafeu, he reproduces the sentiment of Casca, reproving the want of religious veneration in Cassius; Shakspere evidently showing that he thought with Lucretius, that fear was the origin of religion, rather than love and gratitude towards a benevolent creator.

Lafeu continues, Parolles taking up his words: their observations at first being reflections on the medical profession. Shakspere makes Macbeth also indulge in some sarcastic remarks on the healing art and its practitioners, showing that he was much like Molière, satirising alike all classes and all pretensions open to attack. But these are mere excursions to the constant fire of raillery, and the train of reasoning, which he sets in motion against religion. He quickly returns to the subject. Parolles says of the cure:—

If you will have it in showing, you shall read it in——What do you call there?

Laf. A showing of a heavenly effect on an earthly actor.

Par. That's it, I would have said the very same. Nay, 'tis strange, 'tis very strange, that is the brief and the tedious of it; and he is of a most facinorous spirit, that will not acknowledge it to be the——

Laf. Very hand of heaven.

Par. Ay, so I say.

Laf. In a most——

Par. And debile minister, great power, great transcendence; which should, indeed, give us a further use to be made, than alone the recovery of the king, as to be——

Laf. Generally thankful.

Par. I would have said it; you say well.

Warburton allows the object of this dialogue to be ridicule. He says the words 'A showing of a heavenly effect,' &c.,

are 'the title of some pamphlet here ridiculed.' Now if this be ridicule of a pamphlet, it is not only of the title, but of the subject—of religion, of its language and spirit; it cannot be denied, that essentially the most orthodox sentiments of Christians and their opinions on divine Providence are here delivered. If ridicule is intended here, then it is intended in many other instances where religion is introduced, and more so where the ridicule is more direct than in this ironical assumption of religion. If Shakspere's satire was directed against a religious pamphlet of the times, and if it bore relation to the subject matter of the conversation, the writing probably referred to some great political event in history, or to something extraordinary in the domestic affairs of the nation, and, therefore, it only shows the more how Shakspere estimated the idea of a Providence being concerned in the transactions of mankind. It shows what we set out with to be the more probable—that it was a contrast between the sceptical and the pious theory, in favour of the former. The king's speech on the rejection of Helena by Bertram, is very material, as to one common nature, common substance, and common end, here and hereafter:—

> Strange is it that our bloods,
> Of colour, weight, and heat, pour'd all together,
> Would quite confound distinction, yet stand off
> In differences so mighty. Honours thrive.
> When rather from our acts we them derive
> Than our fore-goers: the mere word's a slave
> Debosh'd on every tomb, on every grave;
> A lying trophy; and as oft is dumb,
> Where dust and damn'd oblivion is the tomb
> Of honour'd bones, indeed.

This is followed by a curious dialogue between Lafeu and Parolles:—

Laf. Your lord and master did well to make his recantation.

Par. Recantation?—My lord? my master?

Laf. Is it not a language, I speak?

Par. A most harsh one; and not to be understood without bloody succeeding. My master?

Some ridicule of religion afterwards made out of this title of Lord and Master. Blood succeeding to recantation, refers to the consequences of religion. The dialogue continues:—

Par. My lord, you do me most insupportable vexation.

Laf. I would it were hell pains for thy sake, and my poor doing eternal. * * Sirrah, your lord and master's married, there's news for you: you have a new mistress.

Par. I most unfeignedly beseech your lordship to make some reservation of your wrongs. He is, my good lord: whom I serve above is my master.

Laf. Who? God?

Par. Ay, sir.

Laf. The devil it is, that's thy master.

When Helena inquires of the Clown after her mother, the Countess, he describes the state of persons who have everything in this life to make them happy, yet are longing after a future state of happiness. No doubt this was done to ridicule the pious; and the intention is still more marked by Helena requiring an explanation, and he giving the meaning of his enigmatic speech:—

Hel. If she be very well, what does she ail, that she's not very well?

Clo. Truly, she's very well indeed, but for two things.

Hel. What two things?

Clo. One, that she's not in heaven, whither God send her quickly; the other, that she's in earth, from whence God send her quickly.

We shall find other sarcastic remarks, similar to these on the belief of a future state. Here the Clown says it is a pity they do not go, or are not taken to where they want to go; and another clown says, religious people should not grieve for the dead, if they think they are gone to heaven.

Bertram, speaking to Lafeu of Parolles, says:—

I do assure you, my lord, he is very great in knowledge, and accordingly valiant.

Laf. I have then sinned against his experience, and transgressed against his valour; and my state that way is dangerous, since I cannot yet find it in my heart to repent.

Here is the introduction, and satire upon the phraseology, of religion.

Ber. It may be, you have mistaken him, my lord.

Laf. And shall do so ever, though I took him at his prayers.

A state Shakspere was fond of ridiculing. Parolles gives an irreverential application to the morality and words of Jesus:—

Farewell, Monsieur: I have spoken better of you, than you have or will to deserve at my hand; but we must do good against evil.

Helena, parting from Bertram, talks of her 'homely stars' having failed.

Helena said she did not care for heaven, or mother, so much as Bertram: she has an expression very similar, when she determines to quit the house, that Bertram may not fly the country, but return home:—

I will begone:
My being here it is that holds thee hence.
Shall I stay here to do't? no, no, although
The air of paradise did fan the house,
And angels offic'd all.

The lords conspire to make Parolles suppose that he is taken by the enemy. One of them says:—

If he do not offer to betray you, and deliver all the intelligence in his power against you, and that with the divine forfeit of his soul upon earth, never trust my judgment in anything. * * * Is not this a strange fellow, my lord, * * that damns himself to do, and dares better be damned than to do it?

Diana, in answer to the addresses of Bertram, has a speech upon the absurdity of oaths, to the effect that what is true makes the truth; that not the most holy oath which any man will take, will make a thing different from what it is; that the fact proves the oath, and oaths are unsealed conditions. In a different style, and on a more serious occasion, does Shakspere make Brutus speak against oaths. A lord, mentioning this boasted intrigue of Bertram's, says:—

Now, God delay our rebellion; as we are ourselves, what things are we?

As if to say, lead us not into temptation, if we are ourselves, and not under the guidance of Providence, what are we? The second lord answers:—

Merely our own traitors,

and rebukes him to the effect—That whatever we do wrong is to our own injury, we act against ourselves. This is Shakspere's morality versus religion.

The first lord makes the following moral reflection upon mankind:—

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together; our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair, if they were not cherished by our virtues.

This at least is an amiable and benevolent view of human nature, and one encouraging us to do good under all circumstances, even in the midst of our fallings off from virtue.

Bertram says of Parolles :—

He has deceived me like a double-meaning prophesier.

This frequent mention by Shakspere of this description of prophets, looks as if he thought them all possessed with lying inspirations. As a joke, they give Parolles a pretended friar to whom to confess himself. When asked whether his answer shall be set down, he answers :—

I'll take the sacrament on't, how and which way you will.

Ber. All's one to him, what a past saving slave is this!

'All's one' to Shakspere, who, as Johnson said, after all delighted in such a character as Parolles. The second Lord says, he will not believe 'a man can have everything in him by wearing his apparel neatly.' Was not this the peculiar characteristic of the Puritan? In Parolles begging for his life, we have the language of the sect, and the phraseology of religion :—

My life, sir, in any case: not that I am afraid to die, but that my offences being many, I would repent out the remainder of nature: let me live, sir, in a dungeon, in the stocks, or anywhere, so I may live.

The love of life with him, however, is greater than the dread of something after death, which frightened Hamlet and Claudio. This is nature, and gives the strong a hope of immortality. Yet Shakspere represents life not worth having, the love of it a weakness, the future state a nonsensical fear, and death to be desired as the end of existence. Parolles being asked if gold will corrupt one of the officers, he answers :—

Sir, for a *quart d'ecu* he will sell the fee simple of his salvation, the inheritance of it, and cut the entail from all remainders, and a perpetual succession for it perpetually.

A nobleman had before said, that Parolles would forfeit his soul upon earth for a lie, which he offered to do upon the sacraments. Here it is said more elaborately of another;

and, in the Twelfth Night, Shakspere repeats it almost word for word: and what does it mean? that for the most insignificant thing a man would not only sell his own salvation, but the salvation of all the world, redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus. Setting it against the most insignificant thing, does not it express Shakspere's idea of the insignificancy of the whole scheme of redemption, and the great object of Christianity?

Found-out-Parolles says:—

There's place and means for every man alive, I'll after them.

This is the philosophy of Mandeville in the Bees:—

Lafeu. We may pick a thousand sallets ere we light on such another herb.

Clo. Indeed, sir, she was the sweet marjoram of the sallet, or, rather, the herb of grace.

Laf. They are not sallet-herbs, you knave, they are nose-herbs.

Clo. I am no great Nebuchadnezzar, sir, I have not much skill in grass.

After more immorality and some indecency, Lafeu says:—

Thou art both knave and fool.

Clo. At your service.

Laf. No, no, no.

Clo. Why, sir, if I cannot serve you, I can serve as great a prince as you are.

Laf. Who's that? a Frenchman?

Clo. Faith, sir, he has an English name; but his phisnomy is more hotter in France than there.

Laf. What prince is that?

Clo. The black prince, sir; alias the prince of darkness; alias the devil?

Laf. Hold thee, there's my purse: I give thee not this to suggest thee from my master thou talkest of; serve him still.

Clo. I am a woodland fellow, sir, that always loved a great fire; and the master I speak of ever keeps a good fire.

Then determined to retort on Lafeu, he insinuates that Lafeu is more the devil's servant than he is, and he will leave him to play courtier to that prince as well as the king of France, he therefore continues:—

But, sure, he is the prince of the world; let his nobility remain



in his court. I am for the house with the narrow gate, which I take to be too little for pomp to enter; some that humble themselves may, but the many will be too chill and tender; and they will be for the flowery way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire.

The reasons why he liked a good fire he transfers to Lafeu, who being as the children of the world, chill and tender, will prefer the heat, and go the way that leads to hell. First, the Old and then the New Testament is held up to ridicule. Here we are told the many will be damned, as before, many of the rich. At least three times has this jest been repeated —the subject of the satire being the words of Jesus.

Yet Warburton says of this very speech of the clown—'Shakspere is but *rarely* guilty of such *impious trash*.' The confession is made by this great divine of Shakspere's occasional impiety with regard to a future state. Though identically the same is three times issued as the current coin of Shakspere's mind. Shakspere is 'rarely guilty of such impious trash,' trying to pass false for real wit. Here we have Warburton and Knight both allowing, and both denying, Shakspere's infidelity; and we have Johnson recognising, in Parolles' speeches, Shakspere's 'manner,' which Warburton says is *rarely*, and Johnson *often* recurring, in words, and carried out as a principle of composition.

Johnson observes that 'Parolles has many of the lineaments of Falstaff, and seems to be the character which Shakspere delighted to draw—a fellow that had more wit than virtue. Though justice required that he should be detected and exposed, yet his vices sit so fit in him, that he is not at last suffered to starve.' So, according to our great moralist—for Johnson in these observations speaks as one—Shakspere had a preference in character, and of course in drawing it, he had a preference for the opinions he endowed it with. It was this wit which was impiety; it was this want of virtue which made Falstaff and Parolles agree. Shakspere, we are told, delighted in such characters, and in wit, as Johnson elsewhere tells us, at the expense of religion. Here was the want of moral justice in the catastrophe. Johnson, in his preface, remarks of Shakspere—'The poet does not neglect his favourite, though he can show the most savage indifference to innocent mediocrity.' He makes Pa-



rolles no worse off than he was before—contented to eat and live. As in Measure for Measure, Johnson remarks, Shakspere makes the duke remember to pardon the unbelieving felon guilty of two murders, whilst he punishes the mere libeller of his person. Parolles is more true to his pretensions, by saying he will thank God for Lafeu's benevolence: this, probably, being said in satire of the Puritans, who would acknowledge gratitude as only due to God: at any rate it is impiety in the mouth of Parolles, who had just shown his utter disregard of God.

Diana says, producing Helena:—

> So there's my riddle—one, that's dead, is quick,
> And now behold the meaning.

The phraseology of the doctrine of the resurrection entwined in a riddle.

KING HENRY V.

One word more, I beseech you. If you be not too much cloyed with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katharine of France; where, for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already he be killed with your hard opinions; for Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man.

These last words of the epilogue of the Second Part of Henry IV., constitute our author's prologue to this play.

It is said that Queen Elizabeth asked for Falstaff again in the Merry Wives of Windsor, but it is more probable that Shakspere and the public both indulged their natural inclinations to restore him to a scene where he had drooped under the heaviness of the religion which the new king evinced in the play of Henry IV.

Shakspere, it is said, intended to have carried his Falstaff through the play, which would have made it more of a piece with the rest, but he gradually gave into his subject which was the heroic, and afterwards added the chorusses to suit the style of a drama, rather foreign to him, to his audience, and to stage effect. Henry V. and Henry VIII., allowed to be not so successful as his other plays, may be given as instances where religion being obliged to be introduced as the staple of character, was not natural to the author, and repressed his excursions.

This play opens with a dialogue between two churchmen —the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of Ely. Shakspere never draws these characters to advantage, and here he represents the two worldly-minded ecclesiastics determining to prevent a reform of the church by throwing the whole world into confusion. Knight says of the opening scene, that Shakspere took it from Hall, 'who was as bitter a hater of priests as Hume;' but in Hume's history we doubt



whether there is a passage more satirical of religion, and more expressive of materialism, than the speech he puts in the mouth of the Archbishop of Canterbury on miracles and natural causes. The intention of their meeting is to show that they must look to policy, and not to Providence, to defend the church.

Speaking of Henry's sudden change from the foolish prince to the wiser king, Ely refers it to natural causes, and compares it by analogy with other things, which bad in appearance often conceal what are better in reality, and growing in secret, only wait the opportunity to show themselves. Canterbury answers almost in the words of the philosophical persons mentioned by Lafeu:—

> **It must be so; for miracles are ceas'd;**
> **And therefore we must needs admit the means,**
> **How things are perfected.**

Meaning that they would have it a miracle if they could, but they are now obliged to acknowledge—at least among themselves—that all things proceed in the ordinary course of nature, and not from special Providence. Now, Christians think that in no way is divine Providence more shown than in the repentance and reformation of a sinner; but the remedy which almost all ascribe to heaven, these prelates ascribe to ourselves. Shakspere seems to go round the circle of every possible idea, in order to dispense with providential interference in human affairs. Even in such an uncommon event of history, one of such general moment as the change in the manners of Henry, even in the great political changes of the past and the present reign, interwoven with the affairs of the church, these prelates did not acknowledge any but natural means; they did not give any credit to religion, showed no gratitude to God for escape from the rapacious hands of the aristocracy. Not a sentiment of religion when you would most look for it, and irreligion where you would least expect it, is common with our dramatist—another answer to the vulgar objection that Shakspere only speaks in character, and, therefore, no irreligious sentiment can be attached to him. The proof is directly to the contrary—a proof which he nearly always gives in making priests talk philosophically. It is Knight who says of Henry V —'It was for the

old chroniclers to talk of his miraculous conversion; it was for Shakspere to show the gradations of his course.' But Shakspere makes the chroniclers—that is, the priests of old times, who had such a tendency to talk of miracles—talk just the contrary.

Canterbury, when asked by Henry V. whether he can, in conscience, claim the throne of France, answers, as the Jews did:—

> The sin upon my head, dread sovereign!
> For in the book of Numbers is it writ,
> When the son dies, let the inheritance
> Descend unto the daughter.

This is a quotation that may be held as suitable to the person of the quoter; but considering the purpose for which it is employed, 'tenderness' of holy things would have omitted it. Nothing can be less clerical, and more irreligiously cruel, than the rest of his speech. Shakspere shows how religion can defend the worst of actions, he makes the war originate in the counsels of holy men, and the king play the sophist in the cause.

Bardolph proposes to Nym a reconciliation with Pistol, who has married Mrs. Quickly, in spite of her troth plighted to Nym. The jilted soldier answers with one of those philosophical reflections so often found in the mouths of these men in our poet's plays. The observation implies the certainty of life, that we are certain of nothing else; the uncertainty when death may come of what may happen to us—the one *is*, the other *may be*, that is the conclusion in which he rests:—

> 'Faith, I will live so long as I may, that 's the certain of it; and when I cannot live any longer, I will do as I may: that is my rest, that is the rendezvous of it.—I cannot tell; things must be as they may: men may sleep, and they may have their throats about them at that time; and some say knives have edges. It must be as it may; though patience be a tired mare, yet she will plod. There must be conclusions.

Thus is prefaced Jack Falstaff's approaching death. It is announced that he has taken to his bed, and the boy, an apt pupil of the knight, tells Bardolph to put his nose in between

the sheets, and do the office of a warming pan. Nym again says, 'It must be as it may.' Pistol says, 'Falstaff, he is dead,' and encourages himself and the rest to be 'manly, blithe, vaunting, bristling, with courage,' on the occasion. Such is the admonition they draw from the solemnity of the dying hour. The conversation which follows, with a description of Falstaff's last moments, is a satire we shall not attempt to characterise. The following are specimens of the dialogue:—

Bar. Would I were with him, wheresome'er he is—either in heaven or hell.

Burns, in an epitaph on a friend, has addressed to him exactly the same sentiment. What has occurred to Burns and Shakspere, probably arose from both being of one mind upon the subject of religion. The idea itself exhibits neither an appreciation of heaven, nor fear of hell. Shelley declares that he 'would rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than sent to heaven with Paley and Malthus.'* These coincidences are far from accidental. Yet while the irreverence of Burns and Shelley is acknowledged, that of Shakspere is denied:—

Mrs. Quickly. Nay, sure he's not in hell; he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom.

This is poor old Jack's joke about Dives, Lazarus, and the glutton, revived under a new form. The idea of Abram's bosom, which is sometimes put seriously or hypocritically in the mouth of other characters, is here made a complete burlesque of by the mistake of Mrs. Quickly, who besides doubts its truth while delivering it, 'if ever man did go'—Lazarus or any other—to Abraham's bosom. Besides, the very idea of the fat Falstaff, the very reverse of Lazarus, taking his place in the patriarch's bosom, is intended as the climax to the joke.

Mrs. Quickly. 'A made a finer end, and went away, an it had been any christom child.'

In Mrs. Quickly's opinion, John made as good an end as any Christian, and was as much entitled to future bliss. When

* Preface to 'Prometheus Unbound.'



from the well known signs of death she knew, as she says, 'there was but one way,' she told him to be of good cheer, as he had 'cried out God, God, God! three or four times.' Shakspere appears so often to have had in view the sayings and doings of Jesus Christ, that we cannot help thinking that even here the ejaculation that Jesus made three or four times calling upon God, was uppermost in his thoughts. Shakspere has been so openly and avowedly profane in the character of Falstaff, making such impious parallels and allusions, not trembling before the most solemn and sacred incidents of religion, that such opinion is warranted.

Falstaff's ejaculation of 'God, God, God,' was natural in his last moments; but Mrs. Quickly, true to the old knight's example when any one had mentioned anything of the kind to him, says:—

Now I, to comfort him, bid him, 'a should not think of God; I hoped, there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet.

Nym. They say he cried out of sack.

Quick. Ay, that 'a did.

Bard. And of women.

Quick. Nay, that 'a did not.

Boy. Yes, that 'a did, and said they were devils incarnate.

Quick. 'A could never abide carnation: 'twas a colour he never liked.

Boy. 'A said once, the devil would have him about women.

Quick. 'A did in some sort, indeed, handle women: but then he was rheumatic; and talked of the whore of Babylon.

Boy. Do you not remember, 'a saw a flea stick upon Bardolph's nose, and 'a said it was a black soul burning in hell?

After Mrs. Quickly had given her parody of a Christian's end, in that of Falstaff, his certain hope of salvation, and his state of preparation under her able ministry, they thus fall to quizzing each other's foibles as the ones which Falstaff condemned on his death bed. It is impossible that this burlesque scene (of an event from which impressive lessons are to be learned) should not set the audience in an uproar of laughter, and would do so now.

Shakspere ends not with Falstaff without letting us see that the profane old man could be tickled at the sight of

Bardolph's nose even in the jaws of death—that his wit could feed upon religion even when his body was growing cold.

Several impieties by Bardolph, Nym, Pistol, and Boy, are passed over the stage during the taking of Harfleur. A Welshman, Scotchman, and Irishman, are introduced to swear. They take oaths with the most horrid intentions, for example:—

> We talk, and, by Chrish, do nothing, * * so God sa' me * * there is throats to be cut, and there ish nothing done, so Chrish sa' me, la.

Johnson says:—'It were to be wished, that the poor merriment of this dialogue had not been purchased with so much profaneness.' Shakspere makes Bardolph be hanged for stealing the Pix which holds the consecrated wafer, and which is an object of worship by Roman Catholics. Considering the opinions of the age, this would be a merit in the estimation of Shakspere's auditory. But Bardolph with the 'bubukles' does not obtain his dismissal without an allusion to his 'fires being out.' The seriousness of the occurrence delays not our author's flippancy. 'This poet,' says Johnson, in allusion to this circumstance, 'is always more careful about the present than the future, about his audience than his readers.'

We think the audience must have sympathised with Fluellen, when in his comparison of Henry with Alexander, he says Alexander in his cups killed Clytus, but Henry in his sober senses killed his best friend—Falstaff. We think this sentiment is spoken in character by Shakspere, who liked the office of presenting on the stage the impieties of Falstaff and his companions, much better than the religion of the king. Knight has observed, where they stand in comparison, how miserably inferior is the prayer of Richmond to the spirited and irreligious address of Richard III. to his army. As Richmond's speech might, so might Henry's be addressed to Mars, only it introduces the performance of masses for the dead, and reveals an hypocrisy of the heart, to which the king himself confesses. Shakspere has put together the king's killing all his prisoners, and the death of Falstaff, probably as equal offences in his judgment, and we

think the reflections of Fluellen on the piety of the king after the battle intended for mockery.

The king converses with one of his captains as follows:—

> Come, go we in procession to the village;
> And be it death proclaimed through our host,
> To boast of this, or take that praise from God,
> Which is his only.
>
> *Flu.* Is it not lawful, an please your majesty, to tell how many is killed?
>
> *K. Hen.* Yes, captain; but with this acknowledgment,
> That God fought for us.
>
> *Flu.* Yes, my conscience, he did us great good.

This is not only ridiculing the numbers of the enemy said in the bulletins to be killed, but what is more revolting, thanking God, not for the victory of the living, but for the death of their enemies.

Where was Knight's reverential mind, or the statute? they must have been both asleep in this play. When did the law apply to the introduction of the persons of the Trinity, if it did not in this play? What was the rule of the lawyers, or of the critics, in judging of the blasphemy of Shakspere?

Johnson, however, has performed the part of the censor in condemning the oaths of the king. In one line he swears by 'God's will,' the next 'by Jove.' 'The king prays,' says Johnson, 'like a Christian, and swears like a heathen.' This inability to maintain consistency in a religious character, is a proof the more of want of religion in the author's mind.



AS YOU LIKE IT.

ORLANDO, in his altercation with his brother, introduces a favourite example of Shakspere from the Bible:—

Shall I keep your hogs, and eat husks with them? What prodigal portion have I spent, that I should come to such penury?

The wrestler that Oliver engages to put an end to his brother, has, as usual with Shakspere's villains, a smack of the courtesy of religion. 'God keep your worship,' is his ejaculation. As You Like It, enters more into the philosophy of life than most plays. The *dramatis personæ* go out of the circle of their own existences, characters, and times, and adopt the individuality of Shakspere, whence it has been said that Shakspere wrote this comedy at a period of mental depression. Hallam supposes it to be written 'when his conscience smote him in his own person, when he was troubled at the circumstances that surrounded him, and the society he must have kept.'

Celia and Rosalind no sooner speak than they commence a philosophical dialogue; and Shakspere is so much regardless of character, and possessed with one idea that he makes all alike, however foreign to their natures, instrumental in its development. They speak ill of fortune, though in balancing her favours they allow she can scarcely be complained of. Yet they would have her bestow nothing but smiles. As if to usher in something of a material tendency, Rosalind says Celia is speaking not of fortune, but of nature's offices. Thence ensues further conversation, rather incomprehensible, as to the superior influence of fortune. Next comes a critique upon oaths, the argument of the whole of which is that if a person swears by that which is not, he is not, in breaking his oath, forsworn. That is, if a person does not believe

in a God, he is not forsworn if he takes the oath and breaks it. Shakspere then utters, as it were, a warning. When the clown only mentions the duke, her father, Celia says :—

Speak no more of him, you'll be whipped for taxation one of these days.

The observation of Touchstone, in reply, is the key to all Shakspere's fools. :—

The more pity, that fools may not speak wisely, what wise men do foolishly.

What the fools uttered was the wisdom of Shakspere, and he doubtless desired to speak more freely than he did, of men and things. The wisdom of the world, its conventional teaching, was the real folly. Celia says, corroborating the truth of the clown :—

By my troth, thou say'st true; for since the little wit, that fools have, was silenced, the little foolery that wise men have, makes a great show.

When Le Beau wants to know how he shall answer the inquiries of Celia, Touchstone says :—

As the destinies decree.

Cel. Well said, that was laid on with a trowel.

Le Beau, as treated by Touchstone, is evidently a poor old fool, in whose mouth Shakspere puts religion.

Orlando, with no hope of hereafter, speaks of death happening to him in the combat, as a man would defend suicide :—

I shall do my friends no wrong, for I have none to lament me; the world no injury, for in it I have nothing, only in the world I fill up a place, which may be better supplied when I have made it empty.

The want of love he believes he experiences makes him willing to leave the world, and to hate himself. Old Adam did love him. Charles, the wrestler, talks of him as 'desirous to lie with his mother earth.' Le Beau takes his farewell of Orlando :—

Sir, fare you well;
Hereafter, in a better world than this,
I shall desire more love and knowledge of you.

Orl. I rest much bounden to you; fare you well!

The sentiment is in character, and has its worth coming from the old courtier on the brink of the grave; but who will say, even thus recommended, it was Shakspere's opinion, or that it carried any weight with the audience or reader?

When Rosalind is love-struck, and complains to Celia how full of briars is this working day world, Celia says:—

> They are but burs; * * if we walk not in the trodden paths, our very petticoats will catch them.

This might be a truth said of his writings, alluding to the necessity of keeping trodden paths.

The banished Duke Senior speaks materially of his change of fortune. Exposed to the inclemencies of the weather, he remarks:—

> These are counsellors
> That feelingly persuade me what I am.
> Sweet are the uses of adversity.

And he says their life finds good in everything: yet immediately after this comes, by way of opposition, the observations of Jaques on their chief employment and pleasure hunting. After exclaiming against it, and moralising on the stricken deer, his reporter says:—

> Thus most invectively he pierceth through
> The body of the country, city, court,
> Yea, and of this our life; swearing, that we
> Are mere usurpers, tyrants, and what's worse,
> To fright the animals, and to kill them up,
> In their assign'd and native dwelling-place.

Had a pious man spoken as the Duke, of the good in this world, a sceptic, like Hume, in his dialogues, would dispute, like Jaques, divine benevolence, and show there was misery and unhappiness wherever we went; that whatever we did, it was the rule of life. There was something left to reflection, which Shakspere thought it not prudent to touch upon in the invectives which 'pierced through our life;' for life here, evidently, meant something more—as he had discussed all the circumstances of life. Shakspere was, as the Duke said Jaques was in these sullen fits, 'full of matter.' Into the mouth of old Adam a passage is put, which is taken from Luke, and delivered by the author of Christianity:—

> He that doth the ravens feed,
> Yea, providently caters for the sparrow,
> Be comfort to my age!

This might be excused as suitable to character if not thought reverential. But Shakspere has ridiculed these very words in one of his comic characters; and in the first instance of want, Orlando is left to look to his sword to supply the necessities of the old man.

Shakspere makes his personages frequently invoke the heathen deities:—

> *Ros.* O Jupiter! how merry are my spirits.

When Jaques is told the Duke is seeking him, he says:—

> And I have been all this day to avoid him. He is too disputable for my company: I think of as many matters as he: but I give heaven thanks, and make no boast of them.

This is the nature of reflective and contemplative minds: they do not like to dispute on such subjects of philosophy as were opened by the Duke and his courtiers; they know the danger to themselves. Of such disposition Hume and Bentham were said to be; they liked not the irritation of personal controversy, they would practice secretiveness if they could. Such a character, we think, was Shakspere, who could wish to deliver himself on paper or by his actors, as Jaques in the forest, without being called to task by those present for every word he said. We think, too, allusion is made to those who, like the Duke, are praising themselves and everything as a sort of religious thanksgiving and evidence of their belief, and would have all people of the same way of thinking as themselves, or ascribe their dissent to obstinacy or stupidity. Jaques says, he thinks of as many matters as he, though his estimate of them may differ; and as for the benefits of this life, what he gets he is thankful for, but there is no necessity to make any boast of them, because then they would be open to investigation and denial. His verses which follow are a satire upon those who, leaving ease and plenty to obey their stubborn wills, come to pass the life which the Duke has so much praised. When he comes into the presence of the Duke, contrary to the expressed contentment of the Duke, Jaques inveighs against the world, heaven, fortune, delivers

sentiments of materialism, and asks for the freedom of the fool to express his truths. What he had to fear is seen immediately, for the Duke would set him down as one having authority, and becomes reproachful and personal.

If Shakspere was, as is said, melancholy when he wrote this play, was it not probable, when he drew the character of Jaques, and gave him these sentiments, that he was annoyed at feeling that he could not say what he liked?—an imprisonment the most obnoxious to a man of genius:—

Jaq. A fool, a fool! I met a fool i' the forest,
A motley fool; a miserable world!
As I do live by food, I met a fool;
Who laid him down and bask'd him in the sun,
And rail'd on lady Fortune in good terms,
In good set terms,—and yet a motley fool.
'Good morrow, fool,' quoth I: 'No, sir,' quoth he,
'Call me not fool, till heaven hath sent me fortune:'
And then he drew a dial from his poke;
And looking on it with lack-lustre eye,
Says, very wisely, 'It is ten o'clock:
Thus may we see,' quoth he, 'how the world wags:
'Tis but an hour ago, since it was nine;
And after an hour more, 'twill be eleven;
And so, from hour to hour, we ripe, and ripe,
And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot,
And thereby hangs a tale.' When I did hear
The motley fool thus moral on the time,
My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,
That fools should be so deep-contemplative;
And I did laugh, sans intermission,
An hour by his dial.—O noble fool!
A worthy fool! Motley's the only wear.

Shakspere seems to use 'by food' as a real oath, as it was a material truth that could not be gainsayed, and suited the character and philosophy of Jaques. As we do live by food—to set the word against the word—in Shaksperian manner is the opposite of 'we do not live by bread alone.' In railing at fortune, the fool railed at the gifts of Providence under the name of heaven, censuring the divine order of things, which, with sceptics, is a way of expressing their infidelity. Jaques gives, in the words of the fool, the sentiments of atheists as to this life, ending with those ominous words—

And thereby hangs a tale.

Shakspere certainly only wished to be comprehended by those who were kindly disposed to him and such doctrines; he had every personal reason not to explain to those who would have been sure to have persecuted him for his candour. Malevolence in those times would have equalled the ignorance that Jack Cade and his followers evidenced to the introducers of learning in Shakspere's Henry VI. That which was introduced was not Christian, therefore they must be put to death. Such was Cade's argument. The fool's conclusion is always Shakspere's moral on the subject; he always reasons so with life. But the Christian, whose reckoning up is of an account for a future day, does not so moralise on time. No doubt Shakspere enjoyed the constant introduction of these sentiments, inasmuch as he makes Jaques exult in them. With bitter irony he chuckled over the idea that the fool, in drawing these conclusions from the time and experience, was the 'profound philosopher, the deep-contemplative.' As to suitability of character, we should like to know whether fools did talk philosophy in those days, any more than the clowns we see in the circle at Astley's. We cannot help thinking that Shakspere speaks when Jaques says:—

O, that I were a fool!
I am ambitious for a motley coat.
Duke S. **Thou shalt have one.**
Jaq. **It is my only suit;**
Provided, that you weed your better judgments
Of all opinion that grows rank in them,
That I am wise.

To this 'motley' Shakspere probably owed his security in his own times as manager of a theatre. To this contrivance we owe the little we know about him, the apologies we have for him from a Johnson (who thinks he had no opinions of his own), down to a Knight, who would make him a complete cipher, without an experience in this 'strange eventful history.' Do not great writers, especially great poets, write themselves in their works? In the nature of man it must be so, and we may take it for granted in Shakspere's case. Is not the emphatic outbreak our poet's?—

Give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will through and through
Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,
If they will patiently receive my medicine.

Was not all this spoken for the allowance of satire, on religion as well as politics? When the Duke says to Jaques, only asking for this liberty of speech:—

Fie on thee! I can tell what thou would'st do.
Jaq. What, for a counter, would I do, but good?

We almost hear Shakspere saying this of his plays, and asking for more freedom. That Shakspere thought as Jaques did we think additionally apparent from his giving Jaques argument to opinion and the last long word, whilst the Duke's objection has no reason in it. What a fervour is there in the answer of Jaques to the Duke! 'What would I do but good?' It would suit one of our modern enthusiasts of progress. In the Duke's speech, too, is put one of the old objections of the wise, that in mentioning vice you propagate it—to answer infidelity you spread it. Silence and ignorance and darkness being prescription for the foul body of this infected world. We think all this of personal application to Shakspere and his times, because it is evidently brought in as an isolated peculiarity.

On the entrance of Orlando, and after the recital of his and Adam's necessities, the Duke prefaces the famous speech of Jaques on the seven ages of man, by pointing to them as examples that we are not alone unhappy, but that there are always some more unhappy.

In the seven ages of man no religion is mentioned. The conclusion is strictly material:—

Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness, and mere oblivion;
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

No hereafter to adjust these degrees of misery spoken of by the Duke, and no thought that man was made for anything else but to strut his hour on the stage. Nothing to explain this strange history—certainly strange without a denouement.

Shakspere makes his clowns not only talk philosophy indirectly, but lets us know, by their mention of its name, that they are students in the science—are philosophers in character. And this he does not to ridicule it in them, but to point it against the world. Touchstone asks of Corin :—

Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd?

The answer of Corin illustrates a vast number of mankind, infidels and believers, who rest content with the immediate cause, and go no further :—

A great cause of the night is lack of the sun: he that hath learned no wit by nature, nor art, may complain of good breeding.

Touchstone says of Corin, after this speech :—

Such a one is a natural philosopher.

Certainly not a spiritual one. What comes next is an episode, apparently suggested to Shakspere. It is applicable to the questions and replies, as eliminated by the commissioners recently appointed to inquire into the state of knowledge: the answers showed a state of perfect ignorance on the subject of religion :—

Touch. Wast ever in court, shepherd?

Cor. No, truly.

Touch. Then thou art damned.

Cor. Nay, I hope—

Touch. Truly, thou art damned, like an ill roasted egg all on one side.

Cor. For not being at court? your reason.

Touch. Why, if thou never wast at court, thou never saw'st good manners, then thy manners must be wicked; and wickedness is a sin, and sin is damnation. Thou art in a parlous (perilous) state, shepherd.

This is evidently intended as a satire upon religion, and the manner of it in vogue with the Puritans. The point of it is not in the reply of Corin, as some would only see. That would be but a flat conclusion to the wit of Touchstone. On the contrary, Touchstone returns to the charge, and answering his objections to his appearing at court, says:—

Thou worm's meat—Learn of the wise.

This is said in irony of their usages and of them, whom he thought silly:—

Cor. You have too courtly a wit for me, and I'll rest.

Touch. Wilt thou rest damned? God help thee, shallow man! God make incision in thee! thou art raw.

This is no doubt a parody on the religious language of those times, and would, in these days, often suit those exhortations to sinners, who, showing no signs of repentance, no opening of the heart or enlightenment of the understanding, have God invoked to help them out of their unhappy and stupid condition. The expression, 'to have incision made in them,' is no doubt a burlesque of those who call upon God to awaken sinners by some sudden illumination or catastrophe. Corin, though attacked upon a point of religion, is silent respecting it, and answers:—

Sir, I am a true labourer; I earn that I eat, get that I wear; owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness; glad of other men's good, content with my harm: and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck.

Corin's morality is certainly beautiful, and is intended, doubtlessly (inasmuch as it is a theory of life without piety, a clause of which any other author would have inserted in it) as another of our author's emendations of Christianity—as Eloisa says of Abelard: 'and truths divine came mended from that tongue.' On Corin concluding by saying that his greatest pride is to see his ewes graze, and his lambs suck, Touchstone answers him by a mention of sin arising from it. A similar sentiment to which is to be found in the Hypocrite, and the Tartuffe of Molière, neither of which will be suspected of having much reverence of religion:—

Touch. That is another simple sin in you: to bring the ewes and the rams together, and to offer to get your living by the copulation of cattle. * * If thou be'st not damned for this, the devil himself will have no shepherds. I cannot see how thou should'st 'scape.

This is a repetition of the former ribaldry and satire on religion, as well as those professing it. Something more, too, is meant than meets the eye in the devil having no shepherds, considering it is the very emblem employed by the



Saviour. This concludes the subject, without Corin replying to it. People may say why should Shakspere introduce religion, he is of too reverential a mind even to praise it, or show his belief in it, when in real life it would be natural for persons in such situations as he describes, to express religious sentiments if they held any. We have pointed out unvarying materialism, and no mention of the eternal spirit in man. We have shown argument for opinion used on the materialist side, and banter applied to religion, and no answer given on its part.

Touchstone remarks of the tree where Rosalind found the verses addressed to her by Orlando:—

Truly the tree yields bad fruit.

Rosalind says of them:—

O most gentle Jupiter! what tedious homily of love have you wearied your parishioners withal, and never cried, 'Have patience, good people.'

What an incongruous mixture!—

Ros. **I was never so be-rhymed since Pythagoras's time, that I was an Irish rat, which I can hardly remember.**

About three times Shakspere introduces the transmigration of souls, and once apparently with some seriousness as to its probability in opposition to Christianity:—

Cel. **O Lord, Lord! It is a hard matter for friends to meet; but mountains may be removed by earthquakes, and so encounter.**

This passage seems suggested by one in the New Testament. The 'O Lord, Lord,' in the beginning points to the sequel, that something was coming in the shape of religion. After a gross declaration of Celia's, that the versifier can perform the office of a man to the wish of Rosalind, she says, 'Is he of God's making?' which is of a piece with the many inuendos of Shakspere respecting man's origin.

When Celia says, 'he hath but a little beard,' Rosalind replies:—

Why God will send more, if the man will be thankful.

We think the whole of it a reflection on religion, on God

and thanksgiving. When Celia says she saw him sitting under a tree, she calls it 'Jove's tree.' Jaques says to Orlando:—

Will you set down with me? and we two will rail against our mistress the world, and all our misery.

Orl. I will chide no breather in the world but myself, against whom I know most faults.

Rosalind says to him:—

I will not cast away my physic but on those that are sick;

an idea taken from the great physician of the world. In the scene between Touchstone and Audrey, after she has said the 'Lord warrant us' (the gods are constantly introduced, we suppose to avoid the objectionable word), Touchstone answers:—

I would the gods had made thee poetical.

Aud. Do you wish the gods had made me poetical?

which causes Jaques to remark—'a material fool:'—

Aud. I thank the gods I am foul.

Touch. Well praised be the gods for thy foulness.

Here comes a country parson on the stage; Shakspere having made Roman Catholic priests very philosophical, or very wicked, he makes the clergymen of the established church very ridiculous. Sir Oliver Martext, the vicar of the next village, one at whom Rosalind's satire on tedious homilies might have been directed, is to marry the couple. The aim of the ensuing dialogue seems to be to laugh at the marriage service. A hint is given of there being something more in marriage than they think, from the remark of the bitter Jaques to get some one to tell them what marriage is, and from the philosophic and Miltonic observation of Touchstone in favour of divorces:—

Touch. Not being well married, will be a good excuse for me hereafter to leave my wife.

Touchstone departing with Audrey without being married, at the suggestion of Jaques, Sir Oliver says:

'Tis no matter: ne'er a fantastical knave of them all shall flout me out of my calling.

Of all of which it may be said, more 'material' than reverential. Celia says of the hair of Orlando:—

Something browner than Judas's: marry, his kisses are Judas's own children.

There cannot be much reverence in comparing the kisses of the traitor who betrayed the Son of Man to a lover's kisses. But the reply of Rosalind comes under the indignation of Warburton, who would like to exonerate Shakspere if he could, by suggesting an alteration. The answer is truly the child of the preceding remark, and the affinity in irreverence cannot be destroyed:

Ros. His kissing is as full of sanctity as the touch of holy bread.

The Bishop remarks, 'We should read *beard*, that is, as the kiss of an holy saint or hermit, called the kiss of charity: this makes the comparison just and decent, the other is impious and absurd.' Celia continues the religious idea of Orlando's kisses:—

A nun of winter's sisterhood kisses not more religiously.
Phe. Dear Shepherd! now I find thy saw of might;
Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?

This is a tribute to the memory of Marlowe, a quotation from his verses, and shows that he lived favourably in the recollection of Shakspere, however much in the hatred of the religious. Jaques says his melancholy is gained from a knowledge of the world, and from personal experience. A truth, and true of the author, though many think of adding to his greatness by depriving him of all sources of this kind.

Orlando and Rosalind go through the marriage service as to taking each other, and she swears to keep the next appointment:—

By my troth, in good earnest, so God mend me, and by all oaths that are not dangerous:

meaning those not forbidden by the statute. Orlando says he 'will keep it with no less religion, than if she wert indeed his Rosalind.' This was probably all the idea Shakspere had of religion—that it was a verbal tie, binding on some consciences, but of no reality, which seems to be applied in Rosalind's answer:—

Well, time is the old justice that examines all such offenders, and let time try.

How often do we hear of this time from Shakspere, when Providence would be on a Christian tongue!

Oliver, speaking of Orlando, brings in one of Shakspere's moral observations on the all powerful instinct of love in man's nature, producing forgiveness of injuries and subduing revenge :—

Ros. But, to Orlando; did he leave him there,
Food to the suck'd and hungry lioness?
Orl. Twice did he turn his back, and purpos'd so:
But kindness, nobler ever than revenge,
And nature, stronger than his just occasion,
Made him give battle to the lioness.

Audrey, on being told to have 'patience,' a time will come to get married, says :—

Faith, the priest was good enough for all the old gentleman's saying.

Touch. A most wicked Sir Oliver, Audrey, a most vile Martext.

Touchstone, on seeing his rival, William :—

By my troth, we that have good wits have much to answer for; we shall be flouting, we cannot hold.

Shakspere might mean thus o apologise for all his clowns; 'flouting' was his word for mockery.

Of fools Touchstone says :—

I do remember a saying, 'The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.'

Rosalind says to Orlando :—

I have, since I was three years old, conversed with a magician, most profound in his art, and yet not damnable.

Orl. Speakest thou in sober meanings?

Ros. By my life I do, which I tender dearly, though I say I am a magician.

This was a satire on the superstition of the times which believed in magic as sanctioned in the Scriptures, and condemned those practising it as worthy of capital punishment, according to the Mosaic law. We may also believe that

Shakspere spoke in *propria personæ*, as respects remarks which might affect his personal interest. He tendered it dearly.

Rosalind tells Phebe Sylvius worships her, and the good shepherd gives a rhapsody on what love is, which suits religion in the mouth of a preacher rather than a lover. Phebe says she would have Rosalind, were she to die the hour after; and Sylvius would have her, though to have her and death were both one thing, which is not being very religious in their love. It is the sentiment of the Pagan Cherea, elaborated by Shakspere in Othello and Romeo and Juliet.

When Touchstone comes to be married, Shakspere has his touch at oaths—'he comes to swear and to forswear; according as marriage binds and blood breaks.' In giving an account how you may avoid the lie direct by an if, we think we see Shakspere qualifying his too pointed irreligion. 'If is the only peacemaker—much virtue in an if.' Jaques says of him, 'he's good at anything, and yet a fool;' and the Duke replies, 'under the pretence of folly he shoots his wit.'

When Hymen comes in singing a hymn, it need not have begun with words bearing so near a relationship to sacred language, applied in Scripture to a serious repentance and atonement of sins :—

> Then is there mirth in heaven,
> When earthly things made even
> Atone together.
> Good duke, receive thy daughter,
> Hymen from heaven brought her,
> Yea brought her hither;
> That thou might'st join her hand with his,
> Whose heart within her bosom is.

Shakspere then concludes his play by making the usurping Duke abdicate in the best manner he can:—

> Where, meeting with an old religious man,
> After some question with him, was converted
> Both from his enterprise, and from the world.

Johnson wonders that Shakspere lost a fine opportunity of introducing a religious moral by giving the interview between the Duke and his converter. He perhaps intended



the very contrary moral—that a life of spiritual seclusion was considered an atonement for sins, and he wished to put it in contrast with the more material retirement of the S. Duke and his associates. That he did not intend any compliment, may be inferred from the remark of Jaques on hearing the usurping Duke hath put on a religious life :—

> To him will I: out of these convertites
> There is much matter to be heard and learn'd.

From what Jaques goes on to say, his disposition remained the same; and from what has passed, we know that out of the matter he heard and learned, he only extracted raillery and invective.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

WHAT strikes us in this play is the frequent taking God's name in vain. In no modern play would there be so oft a recurrence of the word to no purpose. The frequent appearance of irreverence in this play leads our author to endeavour to defend himself against the charge.

Shakspere calls friendship 'faith.' Beatrice says of Benedick:—

He hath every month a new sworn brother * * he wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat; it ever changes with the next block.

This is a probable allusion to religion, because the fashions of hat, hair, and head, became the signs of difference of faith between cavaliers and Puritans.

Beatrice at once indicates her own character by her language, and that of Benedick's by inquiry:—

Is there no young squarer now that will make a voyage with him to the devil?

When told Claudio is his companion, she says:—

O Lord, he will hang upon him like a disease. God help the noble Claudio!

When Benedick says he loves no woman, Beatrice says:—

I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that.

Ben. God help your ladyship still in that mind. * * Keep your way in God's name; I have done; so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.

Don Pedro says of Leonato's invitation:—

He heartily prays some occasion may detain us longer; I dare swear he is no hypocrite, but prays from his heart.

Leon. If you swear, my lord, you shall not be forsworn.



Such language is no sign of reverence, and is certainly much ado about nothing.

When Benedick hears Claudio is in love with Hero, he tells him to 'sigh away Sundays,' which, no doubt, is an allusion to the Puritans, who have always wanted to make that use of the day. Benedick says :—

God forbid it should be so.

Claud. God forbid it should be otherwise.

D. Ped. Amen. By my troth I speak my thought.

Claud. In faith I spoke mine.

Bene. By my two faiths and troths I spoke mine, that I neither feel how she should be loved, nor know how she should be worthy, is the opinion that fire cannot melt out of me; I will die in it at the stake.

D. Ped. Thou wast ever an obstinate heretic.

Claud. And never could maintain his part, but in the force of his will.

These last words are said by commentators to be the language of judgment passed upon heretics. Unless Shakspere meant to ridicule the usage of burning heretics, melting opinions out of men, their dying at the stake for the sake of opinion, unless he meant to ridicule these and also the cant language of persecution, we should say this conversation is a much ado about nothing. But what we suppose was uppermost in Shakspere's mind, and must have been understood by his audience. This satire on intolerance continues.

The Duke says of Benedick :—

If ever thou dost fall from this faith, thou wilt prove a notable argument.

Benedick, after some remarks, says :—

I commit you.

Claud. To the tuition of God.

Bene. Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your discourse is sometimes guarded with fragments, and the guards are but slightly basted on neither: ere you flout old ends any farther, examine your conscience.

This is an allusion to, and an apology of Shakspere's for, his irreverence. There was a growing public opinion against the use of even sacred names in the drama, which, in the statutes of Elizabeth and of James, forbade the mention of any

persons of the Trinity in plays. Claudio's jesting recommendation of Benedick to the tuition of God, we may suppose meant better instruction in love. It alludes, say the commentators, to the conclusions of letters, which terminated with 'the Trinity have you in protection.' Benedick tells them not to 'mock,' which clearly indicates what mockery was in one sense—the frequent introduction of fragments of religion. Shakspere, who delighted to play upon a word, did so directly he got upon 'guarded,' but became incautious in making Benedick and Claudio so employ religion; and he has at last to advise them to examine their 'consciences' before they flout 'old ends' any further. Now this was the recommendation of authority, or the warning of the pious. Shakspere had already dealt in irreverence most unsparingly in Falstaff and fellows. 'Old ends,' with the addition of odd, are the very words used by Richard III., in speaking of the employment of fragments of Scripture in his discourse, to give the appearance of piety. Not 'to flout old ends' is, therefore, not to mock religion in the Scriptures.

'Flouting old ends' is quickly illustrated in the next act, when Antonio says of Beatrice:—

> In faith, she's too curst?
>
> *Beat.* Too curst is more than curst: I shall lessen God's sending that way: for it is said, 'God sends a curst cow short horns;' but to a cow too curst he sends none.
>
> *Leon.* So by being too curst, God will send you no horns.
>
> *Beat.* Just, if he sends me no husband; for the which blessing, I am at him upon my knees every morning and evening: Lord I could not endure a husband. * * Therefore I will ever take sixpence in earnest of the bearward, and lead his apes into hell.
>
> *Leon.* Well then, go you into hell.
>
> *Beat.* No; but to the gate; and there will the devil meet me, like an old cuckold, with horns on his head, and say—'Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven; here's no place for you maids.' So deliver I up my apes, and away to St. Peter! for the heavens, he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live ,we as merry as the day is long.

Commentators on Shakspere have remarked the impiety of these 'old ends.' Bishop Warburton says that the above lines are 'introduced without rhyme or reason,' and strikes them out. Dr. Johnson says they are Shakspere's own,



too much after his manner, and insinuates that he purchases merriment at the expense of religion—of his own and others' salvation. One tries to extenuate the irreligion of Shakspere by suppression; the other is forced to allow it, which proves the more clearly that Shakspere did not merely speak on account of his characters, but that he had an opinion of his own, and that he stepped out of his way to express it, on certain occasions. Leonato adds:—

Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

Beat. Not till God make men of some other metal than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered with a piece of valiant dust? to make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl. No, uncle, I'll none: Adam's sons are my brethren; and truly, I hold it a sin to match in my kindred.

This speech is full of irreverent satire in the proposal to make man of some other metal before he is fit for her. It is of a piece with all the other ironical and satirical remarks of Shakspere on man, whom he has just before termed an ape, being 'God's make.' The objection of Beatrice to marry, as it is a sin to marry amongst brethren, seems founded on the objection of infidels to the Mosaical account of mankind descending from one pair, the intermixing of families, and the physical deterioration which is now seen to take place when it happens in a much less degree.

Hero says to the Duke, under a mask:—

God defend the lute should be like the case!

He says of himself:—

Within the house is Jove.

Margaret says to Benedick:—

She has many ill qualities.

Bene. Which is one?

Marg. I say my prayers aloud.

Bene. I love you the better; the heavens may cry Amen.

Marg. God match me with a good dancer!

Beat. Amen.

Marg. And God keep him out of my sight when the dance is done! Answer, clerk.

What motive there could be to introduce the litany into a

masqued ball, except irreverence of the dullest kind, we know not. The description Beatrice gives of Benedick to himself under a mask certainly alludes to the times of Shakspere, and to what might happen to unscrupulous wits. We think it is written of himself, in order to deprecate any measure of severity—any much ado about nothing.

Beatrice says of Benedick:—

> Why he is the prince's jester: a very dull fool; only his gift is in devising impossible slanders: none but libertines delight in him; and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villainy; for he both pleaseth men, and angers them, and then they laugh at him, and beat him: I am sure he is in the fleet.

We see how this applies to libellers and blasphemers pleasing and angering—laughed at, beaten, and committed to the Fleet. Warburton says that 'by his villany Beatrice means Benedick's malice and *impiety*. By his *impious* jests she insinuates that he pleased libertines.' But the Bishop overlooks that the speaker had as much of this 'villany' as the person she condemned. This reproof, put into her mouth, can only be intended as a blind, by the author. Benedick strengthens this impression:—

> But that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me! The prince's fool!—Ha! it may be, I go under that title, because I am merry.—Yea, but so: I am apt to do myself wrong: I am not so reputed; it is the base, though bitter disposition of Beatrice, that puts the world into her person, and so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

Shakspere says something to the same effect of himself in his sonnets.

Benedick's remark, that he found Claudio 'as melancholy as a lodge in a warren,' commentators say is taken from Scripture. It shows little reverence to take a passage from Isaiah describing the desolation of Judah to apply it to a disconsolate lover. Benedick says of Beatrice:—

> I would not marry her, though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed: * * Come, talk not of her; * * I would to God some scholar would conjure her; for, certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell, as in a sanctuary; and people sin upon purpose because they would go thither: so, indeed, all disquiet, horror, and perturbation follow her.



This is a reply to Beatrice saying she was to make one of the virgins who, in Revelations, are said to attend upon the Lord. When Beatrice makes her appearance, Benedick makes his exit, saying :—

O God, sir, here's a dish I love not.

God is introduced as an interjection too often to be remarked upon—come we now, therefore, to some matter which seems a religious jest, and to an apology again for the exercise of such art. Leonato says of Benedick :—

I take him to be valiant.

Don Pedro. And in the managing of quarrels you may see he is wise; for either he avoids them with great discretion, or undertakes them with a most Christian-like fear.

Leon. If he do fear God he must necessarily keep peace: if he break the peace, he ought to enter into a quarrel with fear and trembling.

D. Pedro. And so will he do; for the man doth fear God, howsoever it seems not in him, by some large jests he will make.

It is evident some irony is meant: the reality is not spoken of Benedick; some satire is intended on Christians, probably on Puritans engaging in quarrels, who accommodate to their conscience the injunction, receive any injuries rather than revenge them, and then enter upon them with some cant in extenuation of their want of principle and consistency. This fear and trembling exactly suits the description of the way Cromwell entered upon his most violent and ambitious deeds. Leonato gives the '*ifs*,' which, as Shakspere has said in As You Like It, are the peace-makers between opposites, truth and falsehood. Here we have our poet anticipating, Mr. Knight begging that his irreverence may not be taken as a sign of irreverence. He has not yet argued his reverential mind from the irreverence—that would be to tax too largely the credulity of his audience.

Claudio says to Don John :—

If there be any impediment, I pray you discover it.

This from the marriage service is introduced three times in this play.

Dogberry says to the watch :—

Are you good men and true?

Verg. Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer salvation, body and soul.

By such playing upon words, mistakes for which Ben Jonson is said to have ridiculed this play, most serious subjects are turned into jests. Probably Shakspere thought, as many do, that according to the description, heaven would be a place of sufferance, and a trial of patience to himself and fellow-players. Suffering salvation is in evident correspondence with the idea that Beatrice and her batchelors would grow tiresome with their wit and merriment, and hell, in Benedick's opinion, have more quiet and less to suffer in it. Shakspere thinks the joke so good, he very soon returns to it; but as Verges and Dogberry are to talk blasphemy, he makes the principal deliver his morality in earnest. A practice which he follows, it will be seen, in the gaoler in Cymbeline on a similar occasion.

Dogberry says:—

Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will; much more a man who hath any honesty in him.

Benedick inquires:—

May I be converted, and see with these eyes, those of Claudio's?

Margaret says of Beatrice:—

How you may be converted, I know not.

Probably both allusions to puritanical language, and consistent with the play which has treated love as a matter of religion.

Dogberry says of Verges:—

God help us! it is a world to see! * * Well, God's a good man; an two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind: but God is to be worshipped: all men are not alike.

Leon. He comes too short of you.

Dog. Gifts that God gives!

This is a satire upon the dispensations of Providence, that his favours are unequally distributed. What can be less reverential, and more calculated to force a laugh than the way which Dogberry speaks of God? There is a touch of ma-

terialism in the 'God is a good man,' to shew the anthropomorphism of religion; that man is always disposed to make God after his image. Then, in spite of these unequal distributions, to say that 'God is to be worshipped,' is as much as to say that these objections were a reason why he was not to be worshipped. Dogberry's deeming his superiority in stature and knowledge as a gift of God, is evidently a satire upon the religious of those days, who attributed everything they fancied to their own advantage, to the immediate interposition of God in their favour. Leonato tells the friar to be brief in marrying, and give his sermon afterwards, which is of a piece with Jaques's observation upon marriage to Touchstone. To be mentioned, and only to be mentioned, was no recommendation of it by Shakspere and Co. to their audiences; it was ironical, and would in both cases probably produce a laugh. Then the friar repeats our church service:—

If either of you know any inward impediment why you should not be conjoined, I charge you on your souls to utter it.

Hero. O God, defend me! How am I beset?—What kind of catechising call you this?

Leonato. O fate, take not away thy heavy hand! * * Griev'd I, I had but one; Chid I for that at frugal nature's frame?

Beatrice. O God that I were a man, I would eat his [Claudio's] heart in the market-place.

Shakspere, having made Dogberry ridicule God, returns to the charge in his examination of the prisoners. Accompanied with it is a ridicule of the oaths which, in the forms of justice, witnesses are required to take. It would not signify if they were not required of criminals, as the purpose of Dogberry is to make everything more ludicrous by his mistakes.

Dog. Masters: do you serve God?

Conra. and Bora. Yea, sir, we hope.

This is a ridicule of a Christian word in the mouths of villains, but it is on the lips of such characters that we perpetually find this language.

Dog. Write down that they hope they serve God, and write God first; for God defend, but God should go before such villains.

What materials out of which to make a joke of the God-

head! We have pretty good proof of there being impiety from finding it inserted in the original editions of the play, and left out in those revised under the fear of the statute. Theobald says he has added it from the old quarto, and Knight puts it in brackets with the same observation—probably with the same design as Warburton in putting the impiety of this play in the margin, to save the reverence at the expense of the wit of Shakspere. Theobald says 'it is *truly* humourous, and the dialogue would be nonsense and uncontinued without it.'

Dogberry says to Borachio :—

O villain! thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this.

The repetition of the former joke of 'suffering salvation,' and with the same intention. The same oblique hit as before seems intended in the classification of God and villain, when Dogberry concludes:—

No, thou villain, thou art full of piety, as shall be proved upon thee by good witness.

This was being a prophetical witness; as the villains of history succeeding Shakspere's times were all full of piety. It was also the author's prophetical anticipation of those commentators who would prove him full of piety.

Dogberry to Borachio. Nay, an' you be a cursing hypocrite once, you must be looked to.

Whatever the name really implies, those who would disparage religion, from Shakspere to Molière, have made their villains hypocrites; Richard III. was a cursing hypocrite, taking oaths in wantonness.

Dogberry says, God's name is used so often—

That now men have grown hard-hearted, and will lend nothing for God's sake.

As we are told to lend to God, and he will repay, the irony of this is easily seen. Shakspere insinuates no return is made, and therefore people will not trust Providence. In Dogberry's 'I praise God for you, * * God save the foundation,' addressed to Leonato, there was probably something more to



laugh at than we see at this time—but the impiety of his conclusion is sufficiently apparent 'and if a merry meeting may be wished, God prohibit it.' Shakspere might say this with some feeling as a witness to the sour ascendancy of Puritans, in which all merry meetings were prohibited; but it showed a great want of reverence to chide deity for the usurpations of his authority by men. Hero, supposed to be dead, and the scene inside of a church, it shews no great respect for religion in the friar being a party to such an epitaph as is given, and to having such a hymn, solemn though it is called, sung to the monument. He says:—

> Done to death by slanderous tongues,
> Was the Hero that here lies:
> Death in guerdon of her wrongs,
> Gives her fame which never dies:
> So the life, that died with shame,
> Lives in death with glorious fame.
> Hang thou there upon the tomb, [*Affixing it.*]
> Praising her when I am dumb.

The hymn is an address to Diana. It would have been more in character, if Shakspere had had any religious feeling, to have given a young man a little of its sensibility, hopes and repentance at the tomb of one 'done to death' by his wrongs. But the epitaph and hymn as they stand are quite out of character and situation, are essentially profane, make a mockery of religion, and throw discredit on a future state. Johnson says Juliet plays her pranks under the pretence of religion. The friar, in her case, has exactly the same stratagem as is employed here—there turning out tragically, here farcically. But it may be said with truth of all, that they were playing pranks with religion under the direction of Shakspere.

What Warburton said, what Johnson expressed, is spoken out by Steevens in his estimate of this play.

'This play may be justly said to contain two of the most sprightly characters that Shakspere ever drew. The wit, the humourist, the gentleman, and the soldier, are combined in Benedick. It is to be lamented, indeed, that the first and most splendid of these distinctions is disgraced by unnecessary *profaneness*; for the goodness of his heart is hardly sufficient



to atone for the license of his tongue. The too sarcastic levity, which flashes out in the conversation of Beatrice, may be excused on account of the steadiness and friendship so apparent in her behaviour, when she urges her lover to risk his life by a challenge to Claudio.'



MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

THE women in this play indulge in more impiety than the men; when Mrs. Quickly makes the observation that Falstaff is denied the accomplishment of his amorous desires because he does not serve heaven well, Johnson says 'the great fault of this play is the frequency of expressions so profane, that no necessity of preserving character can justify them. There are laws of higher authority than those of criticism.' This disposes of the common objection to the method we have pursued in inferring the religious opinions of Shakspere, from those he has put in the mouths of his characters. The profane expressions, it is said, are introduced to preserve character; but Johnson says no such necessity can justify them. There is no necessity to introduce profane persons or expressions, much less to make all alike in irreligion. Characters are in the hands of the author to represent what opinions or what description of people he likes. It is common sense to believe that an author who has written not only one play, but many plays, and created so many characters of one stamp, acted from no necessity, but from inclination; just as on the other hand we infer that the author of religious poems, and sacred dramas, who is best, most frequent and most forcible in depicting religious sentiments, is at the same time depicting his own.

Johnson, in the above sentence, probably means that if Shakspere had any regard for religion, and had thought himself obliged, by the rules of art, to support the character of a Falstaff, (as a profane old man) he would have done it very slightly, and given it a neutral tint. Instead of this, we have Falstaff's profanity the centre of the play, around which all the impiety of the other characters revolve. This display of art, in the constant repetition of such sentiments, and so

strongly given, instead of being thought a trait, excusable or justifiable, is by persons, who have any real sense of religion, considered the great fault of the play; and the indisputable evidence of its profanity would be confirmation, strong as 'proof of holy writ,' of the profanity of the writer. Shakspere has manifested how irresistible was the irreligious impulse over an otherwise prudent and worldly character, when he set at defiance not only laws of 'higher authority,' but rendered himself amenable to the statutes. Perhaps this was the very reason why Shakspere kept his plays from publication, lest the evidence of what was written should substantiate a charge against him. Any one who now disregards the laws of 'higher authority,' though he may not afford a case for the Attorney General, is not only set down as an infidel, but what is still worse in the fashionable world, as a person of very bad taste. Byron and Shelley have been legally condemned for blasphemy, as well as considered guilty of it by public opinion; an Eldon or a jury might give judgment, or find a verdict against Shakspere on the same charge.

If the language of the soldiers, of the Welchman and of the Irishman, in Henry V., shocked the critics, much more must the words and acts of the Welch parson in the Merry Wives of Windsor. This Jack priest, as he is called, never appears in his own sacred character but to cast ridicule on his profession. With an assumption of learning, which Shakspere also likes to ridicule in the clergy, he makes him speak after the manner of Dogberry—in blunders—a species of wit in which our author so much indulges. Offering to be peacemaker between Shallow and Falstaff, he says:—

I am of the church, and will be glad to do my benevolence, to make atonement and compromises between you.

When the justice says he will bring it before the council, 'it is a riot,' the parson answers:—

It is not meet the council hear a riot; there is no fear of Got in a riot; the council, look you, shall desire to hear the fear of Got, and not to hear a riot.

This was probably also a satire on the executive, who were already becoming puritanical. He says Anne Page has



been left a fortune by her grand sire, and of him he adds, parenthetically :—

Got deliver to a joyful resurrections.

'Got's plessings,' and 'Got pless you,' 'the tevil and his tams,' are his oaths. Slender says :—

I'll ne'er be drunk whilst I live again, but in honest, civil, godly company; * * if I be drunk, I'll be drunk with those who have the fear of God, and not with drunken knaves.

Evans. So Got 'udge me, that is a virtuous mind.

In this parson Evans resembles Sir Nathaniel, in Love's Labour Lost, in his praise of hunting. But the satire is not only upon the judgment of fools, such as Slender and Evans, but upon that of God who is coupled with them. Evans likes dinner as well as Sir Nathaniel. When it is announced, conscience and his stomach are both excited, and making religion the pretext, off flies the parson :—

Od's plessed will! I will not be absence at the grace.

Pistol, speaking of his necessities, and as an excuse for his dishonesty, says :—

Young ravens must have food.

This is drawn from the scripture, which speaks of the young ravens being fed by God. Old Adam, in As You Like It, and Pistol hold the same language, the one in ridicule the other in hope, and both are put to the same shifts—left to Providence. Orlando and Adam would have died with hunger, had not the former thrown away such faith with his scabbard, and insisted upon sharing the dinner of the banished Duke. Pistol manifests his faith in the Scriptures in picking pockets.

Falstaff says Mrs. Ford—

Hath a legion of angels.

A religious allusion founded on the coin of those times. Pistol answers :—

As many devils entertain.

Then comes Mrs. Quickly, whose piety is always profanity. Religion, she says, is the 'fault' of her fellow-servant. She

tells Rugby to go and watch for her master's coming, lest he find Simple in the house, and there be—

An old abusing of God's patience.

Rug. I'll go watch.

Quick. Go; and we'll have a posset for't soon at night, in faith, at the latter-end of a sea-coal fire. An honest, willing, kind fellow as ever servant shall come in house withal; and, I warrant you, no tell tale, nor no breed-bate: his worst fault is, that he is given to prayer; he is something peevish that way: but nobody but has his fault: but let that pass.

The morality of the one was not more scrupulous than that of the other—but the man was religious, which was a fault in Mrs. Quickly's eyes, and we are told of its effects, as we are so often by Shakspere, in it making him melancholy.

All the suitors of Anne Page come to Mrs. Quickly as their go-between. To Fenton, she says, piously, (before she has received his money) respecting prospects of marrying Anne Page:—

Troth, sir, all is in His hands above: but notwithstanding, Master Fenton, I'll be sworn on a book; she loves you.

Mistress Page entitles Falstaff Herod of Jewry, from, we suppose, abdominous similarity This is said on Mrs. Page receiving a billet-doux from the knight. Mrs. Ford, having received the same letter from the same gallant, comes in:—

O, mistress Page, give me some counsel!

Mrs. P. What's the matter, woman?

Mrs. F. O, woman! if it were not for one trifling respect, I could come to such honour!

Mrs. P. Hang the trifle, woman; take the honour. What is it? dispense with trifles.

Mrs. F. If I would but go to hell for an eternal moment, or so, I could be knighted.

This reminds us of Lafeu's speaking of philosophical persons making 'trifles of terrors:' here the same idea is again inculcated by force of ridicule. Eternity and hell-fire are here treated over and over again as 'trifles,' and the momentous trifle, when stated, is so burlesqued as to be overwhelmed with ridicule or laughter.

Mrs. Ford says Falstaff had behaved so piously, that she—

Would have sworn his disposition would have gone to the truth of his words: but they do no more adhere and keep place together, than the hundreth psalm to the tune of Green sleeves.

The clown in Winter's Tale, enumerating the entertainment for the feast, has a remark on psalms sung to hornpipes. Shakspere had before ridiculed psalm-singing, and his opposition to religion must have assumed all the rivalry of personal interest, when they would and finally did revolutionise all the means of entertainment which he provided for the people. Shakspere, though he had not the blood of a martyr, was not much of a hypocrite.

Falstaff says to Pistol, he is damned in hell for swearing to falsehoods in favour of Pistol.

Pistol. Didst thou not share?

Falstaff. Reason, you rogue, reason: thinkest thou, I'll endanger my soul gratis.

Johnson insinuates that Shakspere sold his soul, when he says he has paid too dear a price for his wit.

Falstaff proceeds:—

I, I, I myself sometimes, leaving the fear of heaven on the left hand, and hiding my honour in my necessity, am fain to shuffle, to hedge, and to lurch.

When Falstaff says Mrs. Quickly may deliver her message before his rascals Pistol and Robin, they are 'his own people,' Mrs. Quickly answers:—

Are they so? Heaven bless them, and make them his servants.

Falstaff. Well: Mistress Mrs. Ford; what of her?

Mrs. Quickly. Why, sir, she's a good creature. Lord! Lord! your worship's a wanton: well heaven, forgive you, and all of us, I pray!

Speaking of herself, she says:—

I had twenty angels given me this morning, but I defy all angels (in any such sort as they say,) but in the way of honesty.

Then she talks of Mrs. Page, her virtue in being always at church, and hopes the time will arrive when her husband is out, and she may see Falstaff. The jealous Ford, when he hears himself called cuckold by Falstaff, exclaims:—



Terms! names! Amaimon, sounds well; Lucifer, well; Barbason, well; yet they are devil's addition, the names of fiends. but cuckold! wittol-cuckold! the devil himself hath not such a name.

Shakspere, unmindful of the privileges of the church, and of one who had professed himself peace-maker, represents the Welch parson willing to fight a duel with the French physician. The parson not being at the place of meeting according to appointment, Dr. Caius says:—

By gar, he has save his soul, dat he is no come; he has pray his Pible well, dat he is no come.

Shallow. He is the wiser man, master doctor; he is a curer of souls and you a curer of bodies; if you should fight, you go against the hair of your profession.

The parson talks as fiercely and religiously of doing execution on the doctor, as the soldiers, full of strange oaths in Henry V., who would cut the throats of a whole city. Notwithstanding, he is melancholy with fear; and intermixes the ballad with the psalm, the Hebrew's song over the waters of Babylon. He addresses the rest who come up:—

Pless you from his mercy sake, all of you.

Shallow answers:—

What, the sword and the word! do you study them both, master parson?

The parson and the doctor charging each other with not being true to their appointments, the parson replies:—

As I am a Christians soul, now look you, this is the place appointed.

The host, who had deceived them both, says:—

Peace, * * soul curer and body curer. * * Shall I lose my parson, my priest?—no, he gives me the proverbs and the no-verbs. Give me thy hand, terrestial, Give me thy hand, celestial.

On the search for Falstaff in Mrs. Ford's house, the parson says:—

If there be any pody in the house, * * heaven forgive my sins at the day of the judgment [and to Ford], You suffer for a pad conscience

Falstaff, having been thrown out of the basket into the Thames, says:—

You may know by my size, that I have a kind of alacrity in sinking; if the bottom were as deep as hell, I should drown.

The parson says to Ford, a second time having brought him to witness the detection of Falstaff in his house—

Master Ford, you must pray, and not follow the imaginations of your own heart.

One among many instances of Shakspere's introducing the church service in his dialogue—a use of quotation which has been taken in a modern author, Eothen, as evidence of infidelity.

Mrs. Page says of Falstaff on his second escape:—

The spirit of wantonness is sure scared out him; if the devil have him not in fee simple, with fine and recovery, he will never, I think, in the way of waste, attempt us again.

This is a joke to be found in All's Well that Ends Well. Falstaff, as the ghost of Herne the Hunter, is to meet the Merry Wives in Windsor Park. On inquiring at the inn for Sir John Falstaff, he is described as being in the chamber painted about with the story of the prodigal fresh and new. It will be remembered that Falstaff recommended the subject for room decoration, and was otherwise fond of its memory, probably from the circumstance of a character like his own being welcomed home with a good feast.

Mrs. Quickly brings the message from Mrs. Ford and Page:—

The devil take one party, and his dam the other,

says Falstaff; and then follow the remarks of Mrs. Quickly, that heaven did not assist them, but crossed them in their wickedness, because one of them did not shew it sufficient devotion—representing devotion as a bribe to God to assist in wickedness. Falstaff observes to Mrs. Quickly:—

This is the third time; I hope good luck lies in odd numbers; they say there is a divinity in odd numbers, either in a nativity, chance, or death.

Falstaff had alluded to the fall from a state of innocency, as a justification for his sins: from Scripture, he turns to Heathen mythology, and takes the amours of Jove to be as



good precedents for present intentions, as divine revelation on other occasions. He says—

When gods have hot backs, what shall poor men do?

Shakspere makes no difference between the true and the false religion. He could not think them equally true, therefore the conclusion to be drawn is, that he thought of them both indifferently.

Heaven forgive our sins! * * away! away!

cry Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page on a noise made, and run off.

Fal. I think the devil will not have me damned, lest the oil that is in me should set hell on fire!—he would never else cross me thus.

Falstaff shows his disbelief of the supernatural by not losing his wit in encounter with the fairies. Shakspere has, however, put into his mouth a condemnation of those who are so credulous as to believe such 'excellent foppery;' the title he makes Edgar give to the supposed workings of Providence he here uses:—

I was three or four times in the thought, they were not fairies: and yet the guiltiness of my mind, the sudden surprise of my powers, drove the grossness of the *foppery* into a received belief, in despite of the teeth of all rhyme and reason, that they were fairies.

What is revelation but a received belief? which Shakspere compares to a delusion attempted to be practised upon Falstaff.

Parson Evans says to Falstaff:—

Serve Got, and leave your desires, and fairies will not pinse you.

If Hamlet were written to show the empire of chance, we see in the Merry Wives of Windsor a ridicule of Providence throughout, and the moral or philosophical sentiment of the play is put in the mouth of Falstaff, who, in more prosaic language, speaks of the supernatural, as Theseus did in the Midsummer Night's Dream on a similar occasion.

Knight shows that many of the irreverent passages were after additions of Shakspere. He says that Johnson has found fault with them as profane, but that they contain very deep satire. But it was satire of religion, and is this compatible

with a reverential mind? Mr. Knight does not attempt to go into the depths, and show that the satire, far from being of religion, was evidence of Shakspere's deep devotion. But by the vague assertion of deep satire, he would insinuate that it does not mean what it appears.

How is it that people can see the ridicule of temporal matters, and not of divine things? Dr. Elliotson, in his 'Harveian Oration,' complains of Shakspere ridiculing Dr. Caius—but does he not ridicule the church in Evans, when he introduces it to be laughed at?

TWELFTH NIGHT, OR WHAT YOU WILL.

THERE was no mistake about the profaneness of the Merry Wives. As Johnson says, 'Twelfth Night ventures near profaneness—it is to be supposed as only less profane than the Merry Wives.' Schlegel says, 'if this were really the last work of Shakspere, he must have enjoyed to the last the same youthfulness of mind.' Knight says, 'his talents were certainly employed upon loftier subjects.' How does he know? Is this supposed repentance an apology for the irreverence of Twelfth Night? It was acted, we are told, before the lawyers in Temple Hall. They were then noted for their profanity; they sided with the cavaliers, and have ever been as Benson, the preacher of the Temple, is said to have told them—of a sceptical turn of mind.

Viola says of her brother:—

> And what should I do in Illyria?
> My brother he is in Elysium.——
> Perchance he is not drown'd;—what think you, sailors?
> *Cap.* It is perchance that you yourself were sav'd.
> *Vio.* O my poor brother! so, perchance, may he be.
> *Cap.* True, Madam: and to comfort you with chance,
> Assure yourself, after our ship did split,
> When you, and those poor number sav'd with you,
> Hung on our driving boat, I saw your brother,
> Most provident in peril, bind himself
> (Courage and hope both teaching him the practice)
> To a strong mast that liv'd upon the sea.

Here we see no mention of heaven, providence, divinity, miracle, or other supernatural power, but have chance strongly insisted upon.

Sir Andrew Ague-cheek enters, who says:—

> Methinks sometimes I have no more wit than a Christian.



This might be well appreciated by the lawyers who, from the time of the Gospels, seemed to have relied upon their parts, and to have had a great contempt for faith.

Clo. Well God, give them wisdom, that have it; and those that are fools, let them use their talents.

This seems to be an allusion to the parable of the talents, God giving to those who have, and taking away from those who make no use of their gifts; and also perhaps to the Puritans, who affected to have their wisdom from God.

Clo. Virtue that transgresses, is but patched with sin; and sin, that amends, is but patched with virtue.

This is one of Shakspere's lenient ways of striking the balance between vice and virtue. Then ensues the pastime between the Clown and Olivia, similar to that which takes place between the Clown and Countess in All's Well that Ends Well. Of course, religion is the subject of their repartees. The Clown asks leave to prove her a fool:—

I must catechise you for it, madonna: Good my mouse of virtue, answer me.

It seems to us that these appellations are in ridicule of the terms in which a little child is addressed on the subject of religious knowledge.

Oli. Well, sir, for want of other idleness, I'll bide your proof.
Clo. Good madonna, why mourn'st thou?
Oli. Good fool, for my brother's death.
Clo. I think his soul is in hell, madonna.
Oli. I know his soul is in heaven, fool.
Clo. The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven. Take away the fool, gentlemen.

Such levity requires no comment. Malvolio is introduced by name as a Puritan, to be made the butt of the play, and to ridicule religion and the religious. When Olivia asks him his opinion of her fool, 'Doth he not mend?' Malvolio answers:—

Yes; and shall do till the pangs of death shake him.

This is often the reflection of the religious, that the irreli-

gion of the profane will be shaken by a death bed. Malvolio then says :—

Infirmity that decays the wise, doth ever make the better fool.

Clo. God send you, sir, a speedy infirmity, for the better increasing your folly.

This appears to be clothed in sacred language, made still more impious by the wish. Olivia apologises for the Clown. She says to Malvolio :—

You are sick of self-love, and taste with a distempered appetite. To be generous, guiltless, and of free disposition, is to take those things for bird-bolts, that he deems cannon-bullets: There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail ; nor no railing in a known discreet man, though he do nothing but reprove.

Sir Toby enters drunk, and being drunk, as Cassio in Othello, makes sport of religion. He says :—

There's one at the gate.

Oli. Ay marry ; what is he ?

Sir To. Let him be the devil, and he will, I care not, give me faith, say I. Well, it's all one.

Viola, entrusted with the love of the duke to Olivia, says :—

What I am, and what I would, * * are to your ears divinity ; to any other's profanation.

Oli. Give us the place alone : we will hear this divinity. Now, sir, what is your text ?

Vio. Most sweet, lady.

Oli. A comfortable doctrine, and much may be said of it. Where lies your text ?

Vio. In Orsino's bosom.

Oli. In his bosom ? In what chapter of his bosom ?

Vio. To answer by the method, in the first of his heart.

Oli. O, I have read it, it is heresy.

This shows no great respect for theology or sermons. Olivia asks Viola what she thinks of her face :—

Vio. Excellently done, if God did all.

God is introduced to make a joke, as his work in man is often mentioned, while nature is spoken of seriously. Olivia



at the end of the first act, involved in perplexities, says very philosophically :—

> Fate, show thy force: Ourselves we do not owe;
> What is decreed, must be; and be this so!

Nothing but a strong belief in fate could induce Viola, thrown upon a coast at haphazard, to make love to the duke, already in love with another, and think to win him. The empire of fate, turning things upside down, seems to be the point of this play. Malvolio witnesses its reverses, thinking fortune thrust upon him.

Viola says:—

> Fortune forbid, my outside have not charm'd her
> She made good view of me; indeed so much.

And speaking of the sinister influence of love upon woman:—

> Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we,
> For such as we are made, if such we be.
> O time, thou must untangle this, not I;
> It is too hard a knot for me t'untie.

Such was the madness of Viola, and such was the madness of Olivia; Viola excusing her own and the lunacy of Olivia by the necessity of Robert Owen.

Sir Toby says to the steward who has interrupted his midnight orgies:—

> Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?

This is the well known address to the Puritans, who would interfere, not only with the pleasures of the table, but with all those pastimes of the people which were Shakspere's delight and business.

Maria says:—

> Marry, sir, sometimes he is a kind of a Puritan.
>
> *Sir And.* O, if I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog.
>
> *Sir To.* What, for being a Puritan? thy exquisite reason, dear knight.
>
> *Sir And.* I have no exquisite reason for't, but I have reason good enough.

There was justification enough to depart from passive obedience, and enter upon a defensive warfare against the

Puritans, who attacked the stage. Fabian, who appears only to make one of the conspirators, (one of the servants, as Shakspere considered himself, in relation to royalty and his patrons) when asked by Sir Toby if he would not like to see such a rascally sheep-biter, who attacked those who did not give provocation, come by some notable shame, answers :—

I would exult, man: you know, he brought me out o' favour with my lady about a bear baiting here.

Mal. 'Tis but fortune, all is fortune.

The latter tells him :—

Thy fates open their hands, let thy blood and spirit embrace them.

And he is recommended to go cross-gartered, which was the habit of the Puritans, which habit Olivia hated, as Queen Bess might have done, or any other majesty in power.

The Clown says he lives by the church, though no churchman, because his house stands by the church ; and asked for a reason, says :—

I can yield you none without words, and words are grown so false, I am loth to prove reason with them.

Viola elaborately apologises for the fool. Sir Andrew says :—

I had as lief be a Brownist as a politician.

This was a sect of the Puritans, who afterwards figured so much as politicians in the revolution; and this contempt of their religion and politics would be well received in the Temple Hall. The commentators say, the instruction of Sir Toby to Sir Andrew, how to write a letter of defiance to Viola, is a satire upon Coke's speech against Raleigh, when he called him an atheist. Raleigh appears to have been a friend and favourite of Shakspere, and his sentiments were probably responded to by the Templars, however much they were in favour of power, and the license of the bar. Here their speculative overpowered their political and professional feelings.

We think the introduction of religion is in irony of it,

when Maria, finding Malvolio has acted up to the letter, says:—

'Yond' gull, Malvolio is turned heathen, a very renegado; for there is no christian that means to be saved by believing rightly, can ever believe such impossible passages of grossness.

Olivia inquires for Malvolio, and says of him, 'he is sad,' which, as we have so often observed, is a characteristic Shakspere always gives to the religious. Olivia, on seeing him, says, 'God comfort thee, heaven restore them;' and Shakspere, to avoid the statute, makes Malvolio say:—

It is Jove's doing, and Jove make me thankful!

The next and remaining scenes with Malvolio, baited by Sir Toby and the servants, are evidently a satire upon possession by the devil.

Sir To. Which way is he, in the name of sanctity? If all the devils in hell be drawn in little, and Legion himself possessed him, yet I'll speak to him.

The very possession mentioned by Jesus is introduced with a sarcastic comment on it.

Mar. Lo, how hollow the fiend speaks within him! did not I tell you?

Sir To. Defy the devil: Consider he's an enemy to mankind.

Mal. Do you know what you say?

This is usually what religious people say when they hear infidels talk irreverently. To which Maria says:—

La, you, an you speak ill of the devil, how he takes it at heart! Pray God, he be not bewitched.

Fab. No way but gentleness; gently, gently: the fiend is rough, and will not be roughly used.

Sir To. Ay, Biddy, come with me. What, man! 'tis not for gravity to play at cherry-pit with Satan: Hang him, foul collier.

Mar. Get him to say his prayers; good Sir Toby, get him to pray.

Mal. My prayers, minx?

Mar. No, I warrant you, he will not hear of godliness.

Mal. Go, hang yourselves all! you are idle shallow things: I am not of your element; you shall know more hereafter.

A chapter might be filled of the passages in which Shak-

spere makes a joke of prayer. We might fancy we heard Mawworm's parting address in the Hypocrite in the final words of Malvolio — 'idle shallow things,' as the godly speak of the world: and as Mawworm says, 'I shall go up, you will go down,' so says Malvolio—'I am not of your element!'

The sequel of the challenge to Viola runs thus:—

> Fare thee well; and God have mercy upon one of our souls! He may have mercy upon mine, but my hope is better, and so look to thyself. Thy friend, as thou usest him, and thy sworn enemy.
> ANDREW AGUE-CHEEK.

'Exceeding good senseless,' as Fabian says. It is the Dogberry style of ridiculing salvation. Sir Toby says, 'tis not for gravity to play at cherry-pit with Satan.' Serious Christians ought not thus to play with infidelity. It is of the above last quoted passage that Johnson remarks—'It were much to be wished that Shakspere, in this and some other passages, had not ventured so near profaneness.'

Olivia says of her love:—

> There's something in me that reproves my fault;
> But such a headstrong potent fault it is,
> That it but mocks reproof.
> * * * * *
> A fiend like thee, might bear my soul to hell.

A conclusion Shakspere elsewhere came to. Sir Andrew, on hearing of the prowess of Viola, says:—

> I'd have seen him damned ere I'd have challenged him.
> *Sir To.* This shall end without the perdition of souls. * * He will not hurt you—come on to 't.
> *Sir And.* Pray God he keep his oath.

Cowards are made to pray, and we shall see how they are coupled When Fabian says of Viola:—

> A coward, a most devout coward, religious in it.

We are told by Shakspere that the religious are fretful, sad, and cowardly. This stroke would be received with applause by the opposite party at the Temple; and Sir Toby, a drunken swindler as he was, showed he did not want courage. Shakspere makes the stage witty at the expense of



the pulpit; and Maria dresses up the Clown as Sir Topas, the curate.

Clo. Well, I'll put it on, and I will dissemble myself in't; and I would I were the first that ever dissembled in such a gown. I am not tall enough to become the function well; nor lean enough to be thought a good student; but to be said an honest man, and a good house-keeper, goes as fairly, as to say, a careful man and a great scholar.

Sir To. Jove bless thee, master parson.

Clo. 'That that is, is:' so I being master parson, am master parson: For what is that, but that? and is, but is?

No doubt Shakspere thought that he or any of his comedians could make as good a parson as one called and consecrated by the hands of the Bishop. Such an introduction on the stage, or a man masqued as one of the sacred profession, would not be allowed in many Roman Catholic countries. We have seen it interdicted in regulations for the Carnival. But the profession of the clergy is always a subject of satire with Shakspere, and always travestied even seriously.

Mal. Good, sir Topas, go to my lady.

Clo. Out, hyperbolical fiend! how vexest thou this man? talkest thou of nothing but of ladies? * * Fie thou dishonest Sathan! I call thee by the most modest terms: for I am one of those gentle ones, that will use the devil himself with courtesy.

The Clown asks him if the house is dark: Malvolio says, as 'hell.' The Clown answers:—

Madman, thou errest! I say there is no darkness, but ignorance; in which thou art more puzzled than the Egyptians in their fog. What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl?

Mal. That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird.

Clo. What thinkest thou of this opinion?

Mal. I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his opinion.

Clo. Fare thee well: remain thou still in darkness: thou shalt hold the opinion of Pythagoras, ere I will allow of thy wits: and fear to kill a woodcock, lest thou dispossess the soul of thy grandam.

Here is a repetition of the idea of transmigration. The orthodoxy of the steward, and the heterodoxy of the Clown turned parson, seem to be made equally the subject of ridicule. When the Clown appears in his true character, Malvolio says:—

I am as well in my wits, fool, as thou art.

Clo. Then you are mad indeed, if you be no better in your wits than a fool.

Mal. They * * send ministers to me, asses.

This is what the Puritans probably said of the regular clergy.

Clo. Advise you what you say: the minister is here.

It was not safe to speak ill of the powers that be. The Clown says his desire of having is not the sin of covetousness. Probably all the ways of the world were then called by the Puritans sins, and considered as coming under some prohibition. Clown says, in answer to the inquiries of Olivia after her steward:—

He holds Belzebub at the stave's end, as well as a man in his case may do. He has here writ a letter to you; I should have given it you to-day morning, but as a madman's epistles are no Gospels, so it skills not much when they are delivered.

Was not this an inuendo, that the epistles whence the extremely pious have taken some of their doctrines were not the Gospels—reiterating the charge of some infidels, that they are the writings of madmen, and not much have mattered had they never been delivered? The Clown begins to read out the letter in a way which makes them think him mad, and as it commenced in words used by the Puritans, 'By the Lord, madam,' no doubt both the matter and manner of Puritans were intended to be ridiculed. When told to read in his right wits, the Clown says:—

So I do, madonna, but to read in his right wits, is to read thus.

Fabian, on the part of the servants, says they played him this trick for his want of courtesy to them; and the Clown sums up the moral of the play in the words of the steward:—

Why some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.

He plays the parson, and says he was one Sir Topas in the interlude, and then mimicks Malvolio—'By the Lord, fool, I am not mad;' then repeats the words of the steward,

decrying him and his profession, which brings in the other aim of the play:—

> And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.
> *Mal.* I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you.

The Clown speaks the epilogue, which may also allude to the times, and is more reasonable than some think, who have called it a nonsensical ditty; the wind and the rain repeated in every verse may mean the adverse is mixed up with the prosperous in every man's affairs—with the philosophical conclusion at the end, that it has been always so since the world began.

In this play we find a quotation by Shakspere from Marlowe's sonnet, entitled 'The Passionate Shepherd to his Love'—another instance that our poet had Marlowe in memory.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA was never acted on the public stage, but is supposed to have been played at court. It does not present such plain features as the other plays. Inferences as to the sentiments of Shakspere might be drawn from it, which we have omitted as not so evident or direct, confining the citations more to those points which it has in common with other plays. There is much abstract philosophy without religion, and which appears to tell against religion. Fate is introduced by Troilus.

He thinks the gods are employed in vexing mankind. In his affairs of love with Cressida he says:—

O gods! how do you plague me.

Pandarus says to Cressida, thinking of Troilus's love for her:—

Well, the gods are above. Time must friend or end.

The language of this foolish old man is here that of Mrs. Quickly, in the Merry Wives of Windsor, to a lover of Anne Page. The Trojans return from the field of battle, and Pandarus tells the names of all as they pass by, and describes each. In his oaths and religious parlance Shakspere converts him into a Christian. Paris passes:—

Pan. **Swords? anything, he cares not: an the devil come to him, it's all one. By God's lid, it does one's heart good.**

Helenus passes, who is the priest in Priam's family, which gives Shakspere an opportunity of ridiculing him, as he does all priests. The necessity of preserving character is the defence of Shakspere's profanity; but was there any necessity to paint all priests after an irreligious fashion, except the necessity in the artist's mind to give his own idea of and

answer his own intentions as to the sacred profession? Voltaire in his plays does not make such perversions of character; he thought every religion alike; yet he did not depart from the peculiar piety suitable to the *dramatis personæ*. Some passages of Voltaire have been held up to the admiration of Christians, as reverential expositions of their own faith and sentiments.

Cres. Can Helenus fight, uncle?

Pan. Helenus? no; yes, he'll fight indifferent well: * * Helenus is a priest.

In the conference of the Greeks, which Agamemnon opens, he expatiates largely on fulfilment not answering our intentions. This philosophy seems a counterpart of those celebrated lines of Hamlet, on divinity shaping our ends, whether said seriously or ironically. Agamemnon says:—

Sith every action that hath gone before,
Whereof we have record, trial did draw
Bias and thwart; not answering the aim,
And that unbodied figure of the thought
That gave't surmised shape.

He speaks of their reverses as the trials of Jove to bring out their virtues in opposition to 'fortunes love.' Nestor calls them the reproof of chance. Agamemnon talks of the 'mastick jaws' of Thersites, alluding, says Knight, to Prynne, author of 'Histrio Mastix.' 'It appears to us (Knight) by no means improbable that an epithet should be applied to the "rank Thersites," which should pretty clearly point at one who had done enough to make himself obnoxious to the poet's fraternity.' *If* this be the case, in a mere word we think our theory the more correct, that Twelfth Night, where there is so much relative to the Puritans in words, matter, and character, was directed against all the tribe of players' scourges. There is some moral as well as material philosophy in the speech of Ulysses. He says, without order or decree:—

Force should be right; or rather, right and wrong,
(Between whose endless jar justice resides,)
Should lose their names, and so should justice too.

But of the effects of immorality, he speaks in the language of Mackintosh—it would end in universal destruction:—

Then every thing include itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite;
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last eat up himself.

What a natural and fine opportunity had Shakspere, if he had had the least sentiment of religion, to have shown this governance of the universe in a divine being, and thence inferred as apostle Paul did, that the powers that be were the deputies of our Father in heaven, that they dispensed his justice; that we must be obedient to them as we would be to Him, and without this order from earth to heaven there would be nothing but universal anarchy and destruction.

By a discreet policy Shakspere makes Ulysses speak against the satire of the camp, consequent upon insubordination, which he likens to that of the players going on in the theatres, and speaks of a king as a theologian would of God, in answer to the matter-of-fact reasoning of materialism:—

So that the ram that batters down the wall,
For the great swing and rudeness of his poise,
They place before his hand that made the engine,
Or those that with the fineness of their souls
By reason guide his execution.

Æneas announced, prefacing that he wishes to show reverence, asks:—

Which is that god in office, guiding man?
Which is the high and mightly Agamemnon?
Aga. This Trojan scorns us; or the men of Troy
Are ceremonious courtiers.

So filled is Shakspere with the language of theology, when he uses it for these purposes! We must ascribe the practice to his knowledge and disbelief of religion. He could not plead ignorance or want of reflection on the highest subjects of theology. All its questions show themselves in every direction, as if he constantly entertained them as matters of

speculation. Æneas assumes this to be reverence, but Agamemnon, the object of it, thinks it is scornful; and so we think is the use which Shakspere makes of sacred ideas on common subjects. Æneas answers:—

> Courtiers as free, as debonair, unarm'd,
> As bending angels.

Was not this burlesquing a supreme being, as Goethe does, introducing the court of God, and Satan upright, among 'the bending angels,' discoursing with Deity. Ajax says to Thersites:—

> I will beat thee into handsomeness.
>
> *Ther.* I shall sooner rail thee into wit and holiness: but I think thy horse will sooner con an oration, than thou learn a prayer without book.

This is in ridicule of the way often taken to make men holy, and which the Puritans made their principal engine against such as were opposed to them. It is also satirical of their praying and preaching extempore, instead of using the church service.

When Achilles says to Thersites:—

> Your last service was sufferance, 'twas not voluntary; no man is beaten voluntary;

we can almost imagine Shakspere meant this for the Puritans, who, as all other enthusiasts, provoked persecution and martyrdom, and said they voluntarily suffered, as they considered, for the Lord's sake, looking upon punishment as a reward.

At the meeting of the Trojans to confer upon the restoration of Helen to the Greeks, the language applies as much to theological controversy as political policy. Hector speaks in praise of doubt:—

> But modest doubt is call'd
> The beacon of the wise, the tent that searches
> To the bottom of the worst.

Troilus uses this language in speaking of the King:—

> Fie, fie, my brother!
> Weigh you the worth and honour of a king
> So great as our dread father, in a scale
> Of common ounces?

This play is said by some to have been written for the court, and acted only there.

Helenus advises that his father 'should bear the great sway of his affairs with reason,' and this gives Shakspere the opportunity of retorting upon the priest, who only comes in that character to be flouted at as belonging to an unreasoning profession, and being given more to running away than fighting, estimating security as the means to dream, slumber, and grow fat.

Troi. You are for dreams and slumbers, brother priest,
You fur your gloves with reasons.

When Hector asks him if he is not touched by the divination of Cassandra, Troilus replies that we are not to judge of an act by the event, or be wanting in courage, or dislike what is agreeable, because of a mad prophetess' brain-sick raptures. But Hector sums up in a strain of moral philosophy which would at once acquit Shakspere of the charge made against him by Dryden in this play, that he was wanting in a moral purpose. It was knowing right and wrong, but not insisting upon the former, that led to the sequel of the play—the death of Hector, and the fall of Troy. Right might have prevented the infidelity of Cressida, the misfortunes of Troilus, and the obliquy of Pandarus borne to all posterity. Hector says Paris and Troilus have both spoken 'superficially' in the cause and question, led by their passions, pleasure, and revenge, and considers them like 'young men whom Aristotle thought unfit to hear moral philosophy.' He then speaks of the law of nature as the law of morality, the first principle of which is to give property to its owners; that the law among individuals should be the law between nations. 'The moral laws of nature and of nations,' he says, require that they should give Helen back. 'Hector's opinion is this in way of truth.'

When Achilles said Thersites was not voluntary in being beaten, but was obliged to submit to what he could not help, we did not think Thersites would next appear on the stage to say it for himself. He says as Hamlet did—shall I only rail at the injuries done me?

O worthy satisfaction! would it were otherwise; that I could beat him, whilst he railed at me.

He vows to learn to conjure and raise devils, that he may see some issue to his spiteful execrations, then he falls to praying the gods in an ironical style, abusing them if they do not grant his requests, and take away from Ajax and Achilles the little wit they have. Afterwards he prays for vengeance, and a curse on the whole camp, ending thus :—

I have said my prayers, and devil envy, say Amen.

If the previous rant of Thersites was a representation of the railing Puritans, was not this speech a parody on their rage, devotion, and defeated envy ? Patroclus enters, which reminds Thersites he has omitted him from his curses, which he calls his contemplation, as a Puritan might. He says to him :—

The common curse of mankind, folly and ignorance, be thine in great revenue ! * * Amen. Where's Achilles ?

Patr. What, art thou devote ? wast thou in a prayer ?

Ther. Ay, the heavens hear me !

This was not only to ridicule prayer, but especially the Puritans, who thought the heavens heard them in particular in promotion of the commonest ends. That Shakspere was bent upon satirising religion, whether displayed in the cant of the times, or those questions of momentous importance to the pious, is evident even in a short dialogue which occurs between Pandarus and a servant of Paris :—

Pan. You depend upon a noble gentleman ; I must needs praise him.

Serv. The Lord be praised. * * I hope I shall know your honour better.

Pan. I do desire it.

Serv. You are in a state of grace.

Pan. Grace ! not so friend : honour and lordship are my titles.

Paris gives a genealogy of love :—

He eats nothing but doves, love ; and that breeds hot blood, and hot blood begets hot thoughts, and hot thoughts beget hot thoughts, and hot thoughts hot deeds, and hot deeds is love.

Pan. Is this the generation of love * * * Why, they are vipers: Is love a generation of vipers ?

We do not know if any impious sense was attached to this otherwise absurd nonsense, beyond its being a parody from

Matthew. 'In the world to come' is a phrase Troilus uses for future times.

Ulysses, in his speeches to Achilles, enlarges upon a theme of morality, which is a favourite with Shakspere, viz.—that virtue consists in doing good to others—and all that a man has of virtue is by the reflection of the good he confers upon others.

When Thersites says to Patroclus and Achilles whom he so despised :—

> God be with you with all my heart;

the point must have consisted in its irony, and God's name was taken in vain.

Cressida calls upon the immortal God to witness that she will not go from Troy, and invokes the divine gods to make her name the very crown of falsehood if she leave Troilus. Shakspere is very willing to call upon the divinity in vain. This brings in an opportunity of exclaiming against Providence, which is constantly done under the name of God, gods, heavens.

> *Troi.* Cressid, I love thee in so strained a purity,
> That the blest gods—as angry with my fancy,
> More bright in zeal than the devotion which
> Cold lips blow to their deities—take thee from me.
> *Cre.* Have the gods envy?
> *Pan.* Ay, ay, ay, ay, 'tis too plain a case.
> * * * * *
> Frown on, you heavens, effect your rage with speed;
> Sit gods upon your thrones, and smile at Troy!
> I say, at once, let your brief plagues be mercy,
> And linger not our sure destructions on.

This is in continuation of the spirit which first directed Troilus's attack upon the gods in the case of his Cressid; then the gods were upbraided with their envy of the happiness of mortals, now they are made to smile and feel pleasure at the misery of mankind—a sentiment Shakspere often introduces elsewhere.

If other morals were wanting in the play besides the fate of Pandarus, and the results of officiousness, there is the great truth, of which Horace wrote, speaking of the war of Troy—'woman is the most terrible cause of war,

teterrima causa belli.' The sin causes the punishment, and as Helen was carried off by Paris, so Cressida is by Diomedes —the frailty of the women and the wickedness of the men producing fresh disasters; as Thersites is made to say, after witnessing Cressida's interview with Diomedes, and hearing Troilus's intention of vengeance:—

> Lechery, lechery, still wars and lechery, nothing else holds fashion: a burning devil take them.

Indeed, Shakspere, instead of being wanting in morals to his plays, in this and in others, seems to have his quiver full of them, so far as is consistent with nature.

KING HENRY VIII.

THIS is the last of the historical series of Shakspere's plays. Though his purpose might have been high, yet Knight admits 'the drama of Henry VIII. is essentially one of pageantry.' Coleridge calls it a 'sort of historical masque or show play.' As the poet relinquished the vague prospect of past history, and approached his own times, he was obliged to adhere more to reality, to leave imagination, the sarcasms, and the privileged truths of the fool. He was obliged to make up for the loss of these, and the old excitement of slaughter and fighting by show, and the discharge of real chamber guns which set his theatre on fire. Truth to tell, the times of Henry VIII. are times Roman Catholics may well abuse, and Protestants blush for. But we absolve Shakspere from partiality between the two faiths, unless as exhibited by a passing reflection on the Puritanism of his own days. This is to us one proof that Shakspere had no religion. It is difficult, nay almost impossible for a man, impressed with religious belief, not to be on one side or another of these religions. None can entirely disguise his real feelings. Hume seems to set the professors of both faiths in pretty fair antagonism against each other: neither party can well be pleased, yet they must each in turn admit their cases to be well stated—but Hume has a quick eye for follies, he paints naked their deformities. His irony peeps out of his history as well as his essays; and though not so evident as in Shakspere, there is no mistaking the want of a reverential mind. We think Hume might be seen, in his history of England, to be a materialist, without having preceded it by a treatise on human nature.

But we must let Shakspere speak for himself in a prologue, which is a sort of apology for the present play.



PROLOGUE.

I come no more to make you laugh; things now
That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
Sad, high and working, full of state and woe,
Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow,
We now present. Those that can pity, here;
May, if they think it well, let fall a tear;
The subject will deserve it. Such as give
Their money out of hope they may believe,
May here find truth to. Those that come to see
Only a show or two, and so agree
The play may pass, if they be still and willing,
I'll undertake may see away their shilling
Richly in two short hours. Only they
That come to hear a merry bawdy play;
A noise of targets; or to see a fellow
In a long motley coat, guarded with yellow,
Will be deceived: for gentle hearers, know,
To rank our chosen truth with such a show
As fool and fight is, beside forfeiting
Our own brains, and the opinion that we bring
(To make that only true we now intend,)
Will never leave us an understanding friend.
Therefore, for goodness sake, and, as you are known
The first and happiest hearers of the town,
Be sad, as we would make you. Think, ye see
The very persons of our noble story,
As they were living; think, you see them great,
And followed with the general throng and sweat
Of thousand friends; then, in a moment, see
How soon this mightiness meets misery!
And if you can be merry then, I'll say
A man may weep upon his wedding day.

After setting forth the attractions of the play, how earnestly he entreats them to forbear their love of fun—what was it? to see a merry 'bawdy' play, or the fool whose subject of mirth was generally religion. But in this Shakspere does not keep his promise, he is indecent when his remarks tell against religion in the persons of its professors.

The Quarterly Review, 1845, speaking of the love of indecency Voltaire had in common with Shakspere, says, 'from the old Italian scoffers downwards, it is curious to trace the almost perpetual combination of *scepticism* and *lubricity*.' These old Italian scoffers were the originals whence Shakspere took many of his plays; he was, on this account, indebted to Boc-

caccio, who was the principal among them for the combination of these two qualities. It will not be denied that Shakspere's characters abound in one of these combinations. Can there be so grand an exception as Shakspere's to the general rule of the reviewer, who has pointed out these combinations? Can Mr. Knight say the lubricity of Shakspere is decency, when the poet, in the prologue, has given the grossest term to it? The opening scene may be called reverential in its language by the admirers of Shakspere, though we think this perpetual recurrence to religion in temporal matters a sign of a man well versed in heavenly things, but who would rather bring them down to earth than retain them with sacred feelings in their proper place. One day, says Norfolk, the French at the field of the cloth of gold were 'like heathen gods,' the next day the English pages were 'as cherubims.' When he says they did such extraordinary feats of arms, that the most fabulous story of former times was believed, Buckingham says, 'O, you go far.' Norfolk asseverates, 'As I belong to worship.' When Buckingham asks who guided the sport, Norfolk says, as you guess, one who had no business in it. And on the mention of the Cardinal, Buckingham says :—

The devil speed him,
What had he
To do in these fierce vanities.
Nor. The force of his own merit makes his way,
A gift which heaven gives.
Aber. I cannot tell
What heaven hath given him; let some graver eye
Pierce into that; but I can see his pride
Peep through each part of him: Whence has he that?
If not from hell, the devil is a niggard,
Or has given all before; and he begins
A new hell in himself.

Buckingham says :—

Every man,
After the hideous storm that follow'd, was
A thing inspir'd; and not consulting, broke
Into a general prophecy—That this tempest,
Dashing the garment of this peace, aboded
The sudden breach on't.



Buckingham is angered at the look of the Cardinal.

Nor. What, are you chaf'd ?
Ask God for temperance ; that's th' appliance only
Which your disease requires.

From the moment they are arrested, Norfolk and Abergavenny are made religious ; and convinced of their approaching end, say the will of heaven be done in this and all things, which Abergavenny at least had spoken contemptuously of. The new fashions imported from France are made suggestive of frivolous conversation on the subject of death, The chamberlain remarks:—

Death ! my lord,
Their clothes are after such a pagan cut too,
That sure they have worn out christendom.

Sands. The devil fiddle them ! I'm glad they're going ;
(For sure there's no converting of them.)

The approaching banquet at the Cardinal's being mentioned, Sands observes :—

In him
Sparing would shew a worse sin than ill doctrine.
Men of his way should be most liberal,
They are set here for examples.

In this there is irony in sense and in language.

Meeting Anne Bullen and the ladies in the Cardinal's house, Sands says :—

Sir Thomas Lovell, had the Cardinal
But half my lay-thoughts in him, some of these
Should find a running banquet ere they rested,
I think, would better please them : By my life,
They are a sweet society of fair ones.

Lov. O, that your lordship were but now confessor
To one or two of these !

Sands. I would I were ;
They should find easy penance.

Lov. 'Faith, how easy ?

Sands. As easy as a down-bed would afford it.

The Cardinal drinks to them, it appears, out of a pretty large bowl, and remarks that the ladies are not merry. Sands says the wine must first rise in their cheeks; and the subject of conversation between him and Anne Bullen Sands draws the attention of the Cardinal to, as a proof of the

effects of the wine. We conjecture it bears no decent inference from what before dropped from him. Wolsey hearing of the approach of the king and suite, says :—

This heaven of beauty
Shall shine at full upon them.
King. You hold a fair assembly ; you do well, lord.
You are a churchman, or, I'll tell you, cardinal,
I shall judge now unhappily.
Wol. I'm glad
Your grace is grown so pleasant.

Wolsey is not only shewn as an example of a churchman living licentiously, but all his piety is alleged to be policy by the courtiers, working on the conscience of the king to achieve his own ends. What we remarked in Troilus and Cressida is true of many of the speeches in this play—they are the words of religion, introduced in a worldly sense.

Suffolk's remarks on Wolsey are a specimen of this style :—

Suf. For me, my lords,
I love him not, nor fear him, there's my creed.
As I am made without him, so I'll stand,
If the king please ; his curses and his blessings
Touch me alike ; they're breath I not believe in.
I knew him, and I know him ; so I leave him
To him that made him proud, the pope.

We have a sample how Wolsey is made to treat religion itself. On the king calling for his new secretary, Gardiner, Campeius says to Wolsey that he has incurred much blame for having removed a Dr. Pace from the post, who in consequence went mad and died.

Wol. Heaven's peace be with him !
That's christian care enough : for living murmurers
There's places of rebuke. He was a fool ;
For he would needs be virtuous.

This is the style of the speeches of Richard III., on hearing of the death of his enemies, and not to be expected from one prelate speaking of the tragical end of a brother. Wolsey has never been represented as impious, and dies religious, according to the history followed by Shakspere. Wolsey is not to be blamed, or Pace regretted, because he



has sent him to heaven. What a scoff at Christianity, as the fool said to Olivia, 'why do you mourn for your brother, if you believe him in heaven?' The scene between the Old Lady and Anne Bullen seems introduced to make people laugh at the hypocrisy and Protestant conscience of Anne, mixed up with the indecency abjured in the prologue. When the two Cardinals come on the business of divorce to Katharine, she is very sarcastic on their priesthoods, and considering what Wolsey was, he is made, in his defence, no less ironical on himself:—

Wol. If your grace
Could but be brought to know our ends are honest,
You'd feel more comfort Why should we, good lady,
Upon what cause, wrong you? Alas! our places,
The way of our profession is against it.

The language of the nobles against Wolsey has frequent calls upon God, and a chorus of Amens to complete his ruin; and Cranmer, who has accomplished it by his zeal in the divorce, is called a worthy fellow, and his reward is foretold in an Archbishopric.

Wolsey says he is against the marriage of the king with Anne Bullen, because she is a 'spleeny Lutheran,' and avows his intention of having him allied to a French princess. Wolsey, according to Shakspere, not according to history, by accident sent an inventory of his possessions with some state papers to the king. Norfolk says:—

Its heaven's will;
Some spirit put this paper in the packet,
To bless your eye withal.
King. If we did think
His contemplations were above the earth,
And fix'd on spiritual objects, he should still
Dwell in his musings, but I am afraid
His thinkings are below the moon, not worth
His serious considering.

This is a repetition of the jeering exchanged between the nobles and Cardinal Beaufort in Henry VI. The king continues his irony, and speaks to him on the subject of the inventory:—

Good, my lord,
You are full of heav'nly stuff, and bear the inventory

Of your best graces in your mind, the which
You were now running o'er ; you have scarce time
To steal from spiritual leisure a brief span,
To keep your earthly audit ; sure, in that
I deem you an ill husband, and am glad
To have you therein my companion.
Wol. Sir,
For holy offices I have a time.

Contrary to all his professions of love only to the king, when the inventory is handed to him he says :—

'Tis th' account
Of all that world of wealth I have drawn together
For mine own ends ; indeed, to gain the popedom,
And see my friends in Rome. O negligence,
Fit for a fool to fall by ! What cross devil
Made me put this main secret in the packet
I sent the king ?

But when he discovers amongst the papers the letter to the Pope, against the divorce, he says his fate is decided.

When the nobles come, as glad messengers of the king's displeasure and Wolsey's punishments, the Cardinal says :—

Follow your envious courses, men of malice ;
You have christian warrant for them, and no doubt,
In time, will find their fit rewards.

This irony is not becoming a Christian, or probable in the Cardinal. He says what he does not think, or professes not to think, viz.—that they have the warrant of religion for their acts, or else it means that there was warrant in Christianity for malice and envy. They call him 'traitor priest,' 'scarlet sin ;' and Surrey calls it holy piety in the Cardinal that absolved his father-in-law, Buckingham, with an axe.

Surrey says to Norfolk :—

Produce the grand sum of his sins, the articles
Collected from his life. I'll startle you
Worse than the sacring bell, when the brown wench
Lay kissing in your arms, lord cardinal.
Wol. How much, methinks, I could despise this man,
But that I am bound in charity against it !

He would defend his impotent malice now by the virtues of

Christianity, when he can no longer execute vengeance. Was not this some of Shakspere's 'deep satire?' The chamberlain and Surrey act up to the professions of Christianity. The former says he pities the Cardinal, and the latter, who had wrongs to redress, says he forgives him. Wolsey makes his speech on the state of man, but there is no religion in it. But how, except in irony, could a man, such as Wolsey, declare to Cromwell that he was—

Well;
Never so truly happy, my good Cromwell.
I know myself now, and I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities,
A still and quiet conscience.

Could he know himself? Was this a picture to show how easily a religious man could accommodate his past wickedness to his conscience? It may or may not be history, but it is the exhibition of blasphemy. Then Wolsey says of the honour taken from him:—

O 'tis a burden, Cromwell, 'tis a burden
Too heavy for a man that hopes for heav'n.
Crom. I'm glad your grace has made that right use of it.
Wol. I hope I have.

But it turns out that it has not given him fortitude to bear the enumeration of his reverses. In the news of the installation of Cranmer, and the marriage of the king with Bullen, it seems to give way.

In his concluding speech, in return for the sympathy of Cromwell, he is made anxious to have the credit of teaching Cromwell how to rise, and avoid the rocks which wrecked his ambition. But rising in politics was ambition that Wolsey's heart was still set upon. For every station the inculcation of morality is excellent, but when he said ambition was celestial, he forgot his religion.

Wol. Love thyself last; cherish those hearts that hate thee;
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,
To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not.

Wolsey's conduct was certainly the reverse of all this, he had not shown any belief in his own recommendations, one



of which, except in a private station, it was almost impossible to carry out. After confessing that he had so much erred in likening himself to one of the fallen angels, it seems like a man who knew himself very little to say—

My robe,
And my integrity to heaven, is all
I dare now call mine own.

The following words are historically delivered to another person, and are incongruous with the preceding:—

O Cromwell, Cromwell!
Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal
I serv'd my king, he would not, in mine age,
Have left me naked to mine enemies.

This shows Wolsey's belief in Providence and the reward of virtue, which Shakspere made him sneer at in the case of Dr. Pace. It still shows the complaining regrets of the defeated politician, in which sense Shakspere seems to take it, and Wolsey ends apparently with the fine self-deceiving hypocrisy which he had shewn before.

Crom. **Good sir, have patience.**
Wol. **So I have. Farewell**
The hopes of court! my hopes in heaven do dwell.

In the fourth act we have a state show—the religious ceremony of the coronation of Anne Bullen, and the people deifying her, which accustomed idolatry of the powers that be Shakspere makes the citizens satirise. While Anne is acting religion, the people are calling upon heaven to bless her, saying she looks like an angel, and behaves like a saint. Shakspere shifts the scene to the death of the really pious Katharine. The 'virtuous Cranmer' had held courts in the neighbourhood of her retirement, until he had divorced her, at which she sickened and died. As a parallel to the coronation procession and ceremony, Shakspere has a real vision of dancing girls, in ballet style, representing angels crowning Katharine with garlands. We do not think this can now be acted upon the stage, and do not suppose it would be tolerated. The dying moments of Katharine so pleased Johnson, that he goes so far as to say it was the finest and most natural scene Shakspere ever wrote. He probably thought



the death of others, ending more as philosophers than Christians, not so creditable to Shakspere. Though Shakspere adhered to history, and in part gives the letter of Katharine to the king, yet he leaves out that which relates to a future state, as may be seen by the subjoined extract :—

> The hour of my death, now approaching, I cannot chuse, but out of the love I bear you, advise you of your soul's health, which you ought to prefer before all considerations of the world or flesh whatsoever: for which you have cast me into many calamities, and yourself into many troubles. But I forgive you all, and pray God to do so likewise.——Lastly, I make this vow, that mine eyes desire you above all things. Farewell!!

Here is real faith in a future state, which prompts her to give spiritual advice to the king, to hope that she may see him with her eyes again. We must confess we think the reality much more touching than the poet's imagination.

Shakspere has contrasted strongly the weakness of Cranmer with a certain nobility of nature in Wolsey, which rose with his decline. Wolsey, put to the trial, loftily defending himself, trusts to his genius for extrication from his difficulties. Sunk to the earth he rises buoyant to the heavens. Cranmer is put by Shakspere to encounter identically the same situation as Wolsey. But he throws himself on the pity of the king, and weeps!

Shakspere has the pleasure of furnishing the mutual abuse of the rivals in the council, making the bad and the good (for Sir Thomas More was of more integrity than the rest) act vilely from religious motives, as well as temporal considerations. When Shakspere gives utterance to such a vague charge as 'you are not sound,' it must have excited a smile in his audience, as the cant of all parties.

In this act there is a dialogue where gross indecency is introduced, contrary to Shakspere's word in the prologue, and at the same time a cut at the Puritans of his own times. It is said that the youths who make a riot at the christening, and on other public occasions, are those who do so in the play-houses, and that they would make a better audience in a meeting-house which is called 'Tribulation, or a Hell in Limehouse.' We suppose at the end of the play these were given as parting tributes to the fancy of his audience, who

had been kept fasting. Under this impression, Shakspere in the epilogue speaks, we think, despondingly of the success of this play, whilst he gives the truth of its contents, sometimes pointing them out by way of extenuation, sometimes as their real merits :—

'Tis ten to one this play can never please
All that are here. Some come to take their ease,
And sleep an act or two; but those, we fear,
We've frighted with our trumpets; so 'tis clear
They'll say it's nought: others, to hear the city
Abus'd extremely, and to cry, 'That's witty!'
Which we have not done neither.

But he had just done it here and elsewhere :—

I fear
All the expected good we're like to hear
For this play at this time, is only in
The merciful construction of good women;
For such a one we show'd them.

This was honest in Shakspere. He did not put the success of the play upon the flattery of the great, or of Protestant prejudices, but upon the exhibition of one good woman of the opposite party, a Roman Catholic, a Spaniard, and the mother of bloody Mary, near the time of the Spanish invasion. This was true faith in the excellence and goodness of his own morality, which supposed in the people the preference of virtue over vice. He proceeds :—

If they smile,
And say 'twill do, I know within a while
All the best men are ours; for 'tis ill hap
If they hold when their ladies bid them clap.



MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

HALLAM says 'Measure for Measure, commonly referred to the end of 1603, is perhaps, after Hamlet, Lear, and Macbeth, the play in which Shakspere struggles, as it were, most with the overmastering power of his own mind; the depths and intricacies of being which he has searched, and sounded with intense reflection, perplex and harass him; his personages arrest their course of action to pour forth in language, the most remote from common use, thoughts which few could grasp in the clearest expression; and thus he loses something of dramatic excellence in that of his contemplative philosophy. The Duke is designed as the representative of this philosophical character.' According to Hallam, the philosophical characters or expressions of Shakspere's philosophy are found in this Duke, Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Timon, Jaques, and the Duke, in As You Like It.

There is no doubt Shakspere made choice of a story for its dramatic merits, but the treatment of it in his hands served several purposes. The mere moral of Measure for Measure may be partly taken from the title. The questions of religion, natural and revealed, discussed in it, induce us to think the title was taken from a text of Scripture, on which Shakspere meant to expatiate—'For with what measure ye mete, so it shall be meted unto you—for with what judgment ye judge, so shall ye be judged.' But the good Duke is shewn to be all mercy, and Isabella, who was the most offended, joins in entreaties that judgment may not be measured out to Angelo as he measured it to others, but that he may be made happy with the rest. Even the unpenitent murderer, the thorough infidel, is pardoned by this judge over all judges. Commentators have been horrified at the wide spread immorality of parties and principles in this play, but if it were

Shakspere's intention to depict merciful judgment, he would not be very nice in shewing a disregard to morals in those particulars, towards which, in the whole tenor of his writings, he showed no great severity. It is his sympathy with irreligion that offended these critics. It could not be expected of a player, of whom Pope says 'he was obliged to please the lowest of the people, and to keep the worst of company,' that he would be very severe against the offences of his companions. No doubt Shakspere read future history with a prophetic eye. He might see from what the Puritans said of the sinful lusts of the flesh, what they might do if they were in power. We forget whether they went to the extent of inflicting capital punishments for transgressions of this sort. They intended it, and we believe there were laws passed to that effect. Cromwell himself partially acted as an Angelo to the city of London. Unfortunates were sent to prison, and transported for life. We think, throughout this play, the Puritans, in morals, doctrines, and politics are attacked. In it is held up to applause an indifference to death, and a disbelief in a future state and punishments. The author makes the good Duke take the habit of a priest, that he may strip the profession of its faith, and clothe it in the garments of materialism and philosophy. Shakspere declares himself under this mask, unequivocally against a future state, and puts in the mouth of a believer a direct attack upon the orthodox belief in punishments after death, delivered by the Saviour. There are passages of infidelity in this play that staggered Warburton, made Johnson indignant, and confounded Coleridge and Knight. In part and whole they gave it up in silent despair, or expressed, sometimes a qualified, and sometimes unmixed, disapprobation; but the wonder has been that they would set out with the prejudice, more or less, that Shakspere was to be made out religious. The play, to our mind, is a very comprehensible whole, though universally condemned as a very unchristian performance. Eschylus and Euripides would be very unintelligible, if taken in some other sense than their natural one. Their plays employ the critical labours of our bishops, and are the reading of our youths, yet they abound in philosophy contrary to Christian truths; but no one sets out to per-

vert their meaning. In the same spirit and sense of harmlessness should Shakspere be studied. True, the pulpit is not to be directed by the stage, the globe by the Globe Theatre of Shakspere, but we may read Shakspere with the same indifference as to his principles as we do the ancients; only, if we would preserve the integrity of sense in an author, we should avoid this religious 'purifying of the text.' It was the literary duty of a bishop, as Warburton, of a moralist, as Johnson, to allow or restore the real sense of Shakspere, to praise and condemn according to their own opinions, not travesty their author, and give him a coat cut to the fashion of the day—a practice now so common to make editions popular and pictorial.

The Duke's speech, in which he commissions Angelo to assume the reigns of government, is ironically spoken, as the sequel shows, of the untried virtue of the man. The sequel exhibits how the private person, who condemns the morals of his superiors, would act were he surrounded by the circumstances of power, and had the will to fulfil his pleasures. Steevens says 'Shakspere must, I believe, be answerable for the unnecessary solemnity of this introduction.' Steevens styles it the same thought as the one noticed in Henry IV., viz.—that from the past you may prophesy of the future actions of men. The Duke knew that Angelo had acted unjustly and dishonestly already in one public transaction of his life. The Duke usurps the words of the Saviour:—

> Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do,
> Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
> Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
> As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd,
> But to fine issues; nor Nature never lends
> The smallest scruple of her excellence,
> But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines
> Herself the glory of a creditor,
> Both thanks and use.

This is taken from the parable of the talents, and is an exact parallel and abstract of the circumstances, only it ascribes to nature what was assumed by religion. These illustrations of the theme would point also the adaptation of the story to the form of a parable so frequently used by the

Saviour—that of a lord or king leaving his servants to act for themselves. They act some well, some wrongfully, some indifferently, some as if they thought their master would never come back. He returns unexpectedly, which figures the day of judgment, when he distributes rewards and punishments to those who have done well or ill in his absence. There is little doubt, therefore, that in manner, as well as matter, Shakspere followed the sacred precedent. This withdrawal of the Duke is not in the Italian novel whence Shakspere took his story, and why he should go into retirement is a mystery to the commentators, who wanted this explanation: we may hazard the conjecture, that Escalus was only introduced as the image of the servant who did neither well nor ill, for that personage seems otherwise quite unnecessary; he has no part in the plot, and the necessary and natural consequence seems to be that he is the only person comparatively forgotten in the end. Lucio and other gentlemen, talking of war and peace, one says:—

Heaven grant us its peace, but not the king of Hungary's.

2nd Gent. Amen.

Lucio. Thou concludest like the sanctimonious pirate, that went to sea with the ten commandments, but scraped one out of the table.

2nd Gent. Thou shalt not steal.

Luc. Ay, that he razed.

1st Gent. Why, 'twas a commandment to command the captain and all the rest from their functions; they put forth to steal: there's not a soldier of us all, that, in the thanksgiving before meat, doth relish the petition well, that prays for peace.

2nd Gent. I never heard any soldier dislike it.

Lucio. I believe thee, for I think thou never wast where grace was said.

2nd Gent. No? a dozen times at least.

1st Gent. What? in metre?

Luc. In any proportion, or in any language.

1st Gent. I think, or in any religion.

Luc. Ay, why not? Grace is grace despite of all controversy, as for example; thou thyself art a wicked villain, despite of all grace.

This jocularity is quite in our author's vein. The rest of



the discourse of these gentlemen is mixed up with the indecency which the Quarterly Reviewer says goes hand-in-hand with scepticism. But at the end there is a play upon the word sound, which our readers will recollect was used as a term of recrimination between the divines and laymen assembled at the council board to accuse Cranmer.

1*st Gent.* I am sound.

Luc. Nay, not as one would say, healthy; but so sound, as things that are hollow: thy bones are hollow; impiety has made a feast of thee.

Claudio, carried to prison and to death, the first seized under an obsolete law, by which others had hitherto passed unscathed, says:—

Thus can the demi-god, Authority,
Make us pay down, for our offence, by weight.—
The words of Heaven; on whom it will, it will;
On whom it will not, so; yet still 'tis just.

It is often the defence, set up by criminals, that an offence is punished in them which in others passes unnoticed. This arises from the imperfections in human justice, and is not to be compared without impiety with the divine administration. The religious philosophy which Claudio has acquired by being sent to prison Lucio laughs at:—

If I could speak so wisely under an arrest, I would send for certain of my creditors: And yet, to say the truth, I had as lief have the foppery of freedom, as the morality of imprisonment.

We have noticed before that Shakspere spoke very slightingly of marriage, and here is given the first instance in this play of looseness of morality in this respect, which is continued in another example. Claudio, speaking of Julietta being with child, for which he is sent to prison, says to Lucio:—

You know the lady, she is fast my wife,
Save that we do the denunciation lack
Of outward order.

But stranger to say, the Duke, in character of a friar, recommends Mariana to have intercourse with Angelo

before she is married to him, and says he absolves her from the consequences of sin. In opposing the priest to religion in this instance, Shakspere seems to act from the same motive; no reverential one as when he makes him deny a future state. We even think when Claudio says:—

> This day my sister should the cloister enter,
> And there receive her approbation—

and when Isabella herself says to the mother of the nuns, that instead of wanting more privileges, she wished for more strict restraint; and when the mother tells her that when she is veiled she may not speak to men—and finally, when this zealous sister quietly consents, at the end of the play, to marry the Duke, when they had only known each other as friar and nun—we are presented with so many illustrations of how easily and quickly religious persons may forego their most pious resolutions when they are opposed to the force of nature.

The Duke himself adds to the catalogue of those who yield to love in the end quite apart from original design. He tells his confidant not to imagine his withdrawal from the state arises from love—or to carry on an intrigue—he has a 'complete bosom;' but he no sooner sees Isabella than he is frenzied with the dribbling dart of love, and likes society better with a wife rescued from a nunnery. Shakspere leaves it in doubt, when Isabella is introduced to the Duke by the Provost, whether she was not 'already' a nun. Even Johnson (Hallam is of the same opinion) thought that Isabella's execration of her brother, when he solicited her to yield her person to Angelo to save his life, an exhibition of prudery and ferocity of virtue; but this was probably to mark her final acquiescence in a state which was at variance with her intentions, and to show how we are all governed by a passion against our wills, whether lawfully or unlawfully entertained, howevre much we may be incensed at vice, and intend to make of ourselves sacrifices to virtue.

The aim of the Duke, in delegating his power to a deputy, is more to see its effects on the supposed puritanism of Angelo than to have the laws executed with vigour. For he had said to Angelo he might qualify the laws as much as he had done, and now he says of him to the friar:—



More reasons for this action,
At our more leisure, shall I render you;
Only this one:——Lord Angelo is precise;
Stands at a guard with envy: scarce confesses
That his blood flows, or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone: hence shall we see,
If power change purpose, what our seemers be.

Escalus puts it to Angelo, whether on the same point on which he has condemned Angelo to die, he would not have yielded to circumstances, had they occurred:—

Let but your honour know,
(Whom I believe to be most strait in virtue,)
That, in the working of your own affections,
Had time cober'd with place, or place with wishing;
Or that the resolute acting of your blood
Could have attained the effect of your own purpose;
Whether you had not sometime in your life
Err'd in this point, which now you censure him,
And pulled the law upon you?

Ang. 'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall. I not deny,
The jury passing on the prisoner's life,
May in the sworn twelve have a thief or two,
Guiltier than him they try. What's open made to justice,
That justice seizes on. What know the laws,
That thieves do pass on thieves?

* * * * * *

You may not so extenuate his offence,
For I have had such faults.

Here we think Shakspere had in mind the judgment of the Saviour on the woman taken in adultery. The offence called in question was of the same sort, the sentence the same, and judgment, divine and human, was the subject of the play. Escalus says:—

Well, heaven forgive him, and forgive us all—

which Shakspere made his judge, the Duke, do at the end of the play, as he would have done at the end of the world. Elbow is a repetition of Dogberry, whose humour consists, as Escalus says, in 'misplacing:'—

Elbow. I do bring in here before your honour two notorious benefactors.

Ang. Benefactors? Well, what benefactors are they? Are they not malefactors?

Elb. If it please your honour, I know not well what they are but precise villains they are, that I am sure of; and void of all profanation in the world, that good christians ought to have.

This is subservient to the design of the piece in its inuendoes against the professors of piety. The 'void of all profanation, which good Christians ought to have,' applies to the charge the Puritans made against our author, and which he answers by a jeer. Elbow says he knows from his wife that it was a bad-house where he took the prisoners:—

Who, if she had been a woman cardinally given, might have been accused in fornication, adultery, and all uncleanness there.

The word used for carnally was a joke at the expense of the Roman Catholics, relating to the Cardinal, who, sent over by the Pope to Henry VIII., was, according to report, taken by the officers in a 'bad-house.' The clown says, 'he'll be supposed upon a book,' which is Shakspere's ridicule of the way of taking an oath. The clown tells Escalus he shall follow his trade:—

As the flesh and fortune shall better determine.
Whip me! No, no; let carman whip his jade;
The valiant heart's not whipt out of his trade.

Whipping, in Shakspere's time, being the cure for unlawful preaching or playing. The Provost says of Claudio:—

He hath but as offended in a dream,
All sects, all ages smack of this vice; and he
To die for it.

Not only is this a defence of the sin, but an imputing of it to all sects. In the beginning of her intercession with Angelo, Shakspere describes her as open to the reproaches of Lucio for her coldness. We think Shakspere unfolds the doctrine of the necessitarians, when Angelo, on being asked by Isabella to pardon her brother, says:—

I will not do't.
Isab. But can you if you would?
Ang. Look, what I will not, that I cannot do.



Isab. But might you do't, and do the world no wrong,
If so your heart were touched with that remorse,
As mine is to him?

Isabella first speaks of the natural attributes of mercy in the words of Portia in the Merchant of Venice, and Tamora in Titus Andronicus. But when that and other reasons have no effect upon him, Isabella, as natural to her sacred character, uses the strongest argument which religion gives for mercy:—

Alas! alas!
Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once;
And He that might the advantage best have took,
Found out the remedy. How would you be,
If He, which is the top of judgment, should
But judge you, as you are? O, think on that:
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new made.

Warburton says it is false divinity that those that were forfeit are saved.

The doctrine of the redemption is here fully delivered. Portia uttered much the same sentiment to the Jew. In the case of Clarence pleading for his own life, it was struck out by authority as impious, and condemned by Knight. Thus much of religion was necessary to the character of a woman, a Christian, and a nun. However, this appeal receives no answer, and religion, morality, and reason, all fall inefficacious. Isabella then makes a transition from piety to paganism:—

Could great men thunder
As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet;
For every pelting, petty officer
Would use his heaven for thunder;
Nothing but thunder.——Merciful Heaven!
Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt
Split'test the unwedgeable and gnarled oak,
Than the soft myrtle: But man! proud man!
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,
As make the angels weep; who, with our spleens,
Would all themselves laugh mortal.

These fine lines are yet strangely heterodox. Glittering with phrases, 'high heaven' and 'angels'—the immortality of



the soul (of which the Christian is so confident) is firmly denied. In what stronger language was man ever taunted with 'being ignorant of what he's most assured'—'his glassy essence'—the soul? Shakspere, like Lawrence, would cut up man with a knife, and amid the exposed parts challenge the identification or detection of the immortal spirit. Man is but 'an ape.'

Isabella says:—

> We cannot weigh our brother with ourself:
> Great men may jest with saints; 'tis wit in them;
> But, in the less, foul profanation.
>
> *Luc.* Thou'rt right, girl; more o' that.
>
> *Isab.* That in the captain's but a choleric word,
> Which in the soldier is flat blasphemy.
>
> *Luc.* Art advised o' that? more on't.

All after the first line in these quotations does not correspond to the subject—the general question of libel not being relative to one of life or death for a mere matter-of-fact crime, which Isabella is arguing. But Shakspere thrusts in his own sentiments, on a question which touched him, and where the law and observances of society were very unequal. This pleased Lucio, who, from experience, knew he was open to some reflection. Shakspere made Falstaff express the same sentiment as the nun, who, a second time, would explain what blasphemy is, and lays herself open to the query of the officer and profane jester. Was she 'advised' of that? We think all this points to what was considered profanation and blasphemy in Shakspere's time, of which he was considered guilty. No doubt then Shakspere had the disadvantage of being the less, and might complain that what was allowed as wit in the great, was considered in him profanation and blasphemy. What would he have thought of time making him change places, he becoming great, and not only his profanation and blasphemy becoming allowable wit, 'deep satire,' but taken as an indication of a reverential mind? It was not necessary for Isabella to defend blasphemy, or to speak of it; had it anything to do with her she would have had to speak against it and against its pardon, but she makes here the best possible defence of free expression of opinion. Isabella then speaks more like

the Saviour to the Jews who brought before him the woman taken in adultery. She tells Angelo to go to his heart to knock there, ask of it if he had committed anything like Claudio's fault, or if he would not have done so had occasion offered. She calls the sin itself a 'natural guiltiness.' This is coming round to a more lenient estimation of the offence, such as agreed with the design of Shakspere, and she put it to Angelo to sound a thought against her brother's life, as Jesus to the sinless Jews to throw a stone against the adulteress. Angelo falls, and as he says it is Isabella's virtue which subdues him: he was one who had guided his choice by reason and could not believe in love, and he is now a victim to the passion, which, pure or impure, it is the purpose of the play to make omnipotent. Angelo, as Knight shows, uses an image from the Bible, and would pray but cannot, which seems to expose the Puritan, and how little his religion can withstand sin. Angelo reasons on prayer as the king in Hamlet, and pleads necessity for compliance with his passions. He uses much sophistry in his arguments with Isabella, and she is no less skilful in reply. From her admission of the frailty of her sex, he urges necessity in the religious form of predestination, as an excuse for the sin which he is about to propose to her :—

Ang. I think it well;
And from this testimony of your own sex,
(Since I suppose we're made to be no stronger,
Than faults may shake our frames,) let me be bold:
I do arrest your words: be that you are,
That is, a woman; if you're more, you're none.
If you be one, (as you are well expressed
By all external warrants,) shew it now,
By putting on the destin'd livery.

Her destiny ran counter not only to Angelo's purposes, but to her own in the end compared to the beginning of the play.

The Duke, habited as a friar, is introduced to Claudio to perform the last sad office of religion. Instead of talking as a priest, giving the consolations of religion, holding out the hope of a better place in a world to come, and the pardon of his sins before a more merciful judge than the one he had met with upon earth—he speaks to Claudio as a philosopher, counsels

him to make up his mind to die, offers him the comforts of materialism, and assures him death is preferable to life so full of ills. Death, he teaches, is the end of all the evils which he enumerates; death is rest from them, and he does not, in the remotest manner, hint at the possibility of a life hereafter.

When at the prison with the Provost the Duke addresses Claudio:—

So, then, you've hope of pardon from lord Angelo?
Claud. The miserable have no other medicine,
But only hope:
I have hope to live, and am prepared to die.

No other medicine—whence was religion? This he calls being prepared to die. The remedy Isabella had spoken of is not thought of, nor does the Friar, with so good an opportunity, think of that medicine, or that preparation, but only objects to a man preferring sensation to annihilation; the loss of identity being a gain. The hope of pardon from the Lord Angelo does not make the thought of pardon in the presence of another and final judge occur to either:—

Duke. Be absolute for death: either death, or life,
Shall thereby be the sweeter. Reason thus with life;
If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
That none but fools would keep; a breath thou art,
(Servile to all the skiey influences)
That dost this habitation, where thou keep'st,
Hourly afflict; merely thou art death's fool
For him thou labour'st by thy flight to shun,
And yet runn'st toward him still. Thou art not noble
For all the accommodations that thou bear'st
Are nursed by baseness: thou art by no means valiant;
For thou dost fear the soft and tender fork
Of a poor worm. The best of rest is sleep,
And that thou oft provokest; yet grossly fear'st
Thy death, which is no more. Thou art not thyself;
For thou exist'st on many a thousand grains,
That issue out of dust. Happy thou art not;
For what thou hast not, still thou strivest to get;
And what thou hast forget'st. Thou art not certain;
For thy complexion shifts to strange effects,
After the moon. If thou art rich, thou art poor;
For, like an ass, whose back with ingots bows,
Thou bearest thy heavy riches but a journey,
And death unloadeth thee. Friend, hast thou none;

For thy own bowels, which do call thee sire,
The mere effusion of thy proper loins,
Do curse the gout, sarpigo, and the rheum,
For ending thee no sooner. Thou hast nor youth, nor age;
But as it were an after-dinner's sleep,
Dreaming on both; for all thy blessed youth
Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms
Of palsied eld; and when thou art old, and rich,
Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb, nor beauty,
To make thy riches pleasant. What's yet in this,
That bears the name of life? Yet in this life
Lie hid more thousand deaths: yet death we fear,
That makes these odds all even.
Claud. I humbly thank you.
To sue to live, I find, I seek to die;
And, seeking death, find life: Let it come on.

Could words express more completely the cutting off of all hope? To be or not to be is not the question, but the determination not to be. Shakspere kept to the most abstract philosophy, and if authors erect not sign posts to their words, the public, it seems, will not see the way they are travelling; and the few who ought to know better join in misleading the many. The Duke's speech is often the answer of infidels when driven hard by the persuasions of a future life; they say, if there be one, it will be an unexpected pleasure to them, as punishment has no place in their theory. The previous conceptions of materialism are to make death sweet; these are the effects of reason and not of piety, and when the priest should have told him to trust in religion, he tells him to put his trust in reason. Of the commencing lines on the estimation of life, Warburton says 'the sense in this reading is a direct persuasion to suicide.' The Bishop wants to introduce another reading, Knight to give another meaning. The Duke goes on to say of life, 'a breath thou art—servile to all the skiey influences.' Breath is made the slave of necessity. For in the above sense strong influences seem to be used in contrast with Providence, which religion teaches us is hourly watching over us, giving us happiness—or if affliction, affliction for our good. The plain meaning of this next line is allowed by all commentators, except Mr. Knight. He says Shakspere was thinking of the worm of conscience; but the worm of conscience would have gnawed Claudio to a very different conclusion, as the Friar

Duke knew. After life comes his opinions on sleep and death. Warburton, having noticed other points of irreligion in Shakspere, and objected to the first sentiment in this speech, Johnson blames him as a Bishop for not showing the same abhorence as himself at this express declaration of Shakspere's against the immortality of the soul and Christianity. Johnson unequivocally, in the strongest and most ample language, puts the 'mark of the beast' on Shakspere—'I cannot, (this is in reference to the Bishop) without indignation, find Shakspere saying, that death is only sleep, lengthening out his exhortation by a sentence, which in the friar is impious, in the reasoner is foolish, and in the poet trite and vulgar.' When Shakspere, in the midst of an elaborate analysis of life, founded on the principles of materialism, says death is no more than sleep, Johnson, by denominating it folly in the 'reasoner,' certainly gave up his position that Shakspere's works support no opinion with argument. If we find it allowed that Shakspere on one occasion reasoned against a fundamental doctrine of religion, why is he not equally responsible on all other occasions, when he gives arguments to opinion, supplies infidels with invectives against, and arms them with ridicule and censure of religion? There was no justification in the necessity of character to utter irreligion—in the present instance there was the contrary obligation of character to have made the Friar Duke speak religiously.

The separate existence of the soul, its immortality and future state, are what Christianity came into the world to establish; all its doctrines signify nothing to a man who does not believe in an hereafter.

It may be said that a man of that opinion might yet not be an atheist, as a Jew formerly; he might still think there was a God who exercised his providence over us in this life; but by some writers on natural theology the denial of the immortal spirit to man is judged to be equivalent to a denial of the same to matter. At any rate he is in a great part atheist and materialist who denies to a God any power over him after this life, and thereby acknowledges matter to be superior to God himself. This denial of a future state may therefore be said philosophically to reflect strongly on all the other questions before discussed, as Shakspere could not well



have been of this opinion, and not a materialist. In his conceptions of the universe, as well as of man, he must have been aware of the conclusions to be drawn from his principles; and when he shows his knowledge of these opinions, and supports them with arguments, we must suppose he was himself inclined to those opinions, which were only in unison and coherent with one which it was acknowledged belonged to him, the key stone of the whole structure. At least, it must be readily admitted that when he showed, by so many convincing proofs, to Johnson (who was slow to enlist so great a genius in the cause of infidelity, who hated the subject, and more than all this particular branch of it) that he did not believe in a future state, all the other circumstances of reason, wit, and ridicule which we have produced of his upon this side, must be allowed to be but various ways of shewing his own disbelief of it and everything relating to it. This denial of the immortality of the soul is immediately succeeded by a denial of any separate existence. The old metaphysicians would prove the soul by an appeal to our own individual consciousness, the Ego sum, the I am of everybody. But Shakspere says, 'thou art not thyself,' and proceeds to prove it from chemical considerations. The very reason Christians give for believing in a future state of happiness, that we are not made to be happy here, Shakspere brings forward as an argument for desiring and believing in eternal sleep. The treasures in heaven, that death doth not 'unload' us of, are not acknowledged by the Friar, who went to the monastery for instruction how to behave himself, but seems to have come away without it. No one who believed in, or had any reverence for the divine command, 'honour thy father and mother that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth,' could impute the sentiment to all mankind—of a universal want of filial affection. The Friar's description of the relations generally held between father and son certainly is not favourable to them, as they are given as a reason for going out of the world. The climax of this bold suicidal argument needs no further illustration. It is a summing up of materialism resulting from his views. The reasoning of the Duke has for a time the desired effect upon Claudio—he becomes a convert to the philosophy of materialism, is made to prefer



death to life, and neither to fear nor to hope anything beyond the grave.

On Claudio's inquiring what comfort his sister brings him, Isabella answers :—

> Lord Angelo, having affairs to heaven,
> Intends you for his swift ambassador.

Ironical language on this occasion seems rather misplaced in a nun, who believed in heaven, and knew Angelo had no business there. She fears Claudio's resolution, but fresh from the Friar's ministration he assures her quite materially :—

> If I must die,
> I will encounter darkness as a bride,
> And hug it in mine arms.

The nun, no more than the Friar, speaks the language befitting profession and the occasion. She does not offer him the consolations of religion, nor hold out the promises of salvation to dissipate the terrors of damnation; unless indeed the satire on Angelo's sentencing him to death is to be taken for religion, and to be imputed to Shakspere's reverence for sacred things. His sister is afraid that the sense of death in dying, that corporal sufferance, will overpower the resolution of her brother. But his thoughts are not so grossly material, the more spiritual and imaginative are made to unnerve him, he will even encounter darkness as a bride, until illumined by the light of hell; he does not fear 'the sting of death,' but only the victory over the grave. Up to this he is impressed with the philosophy of the Friar. Isabella says were it but her life in danger, she would part with it as freely as with a pin. To remove this fear of future punishment, he argues that it cannot be damnable, as for a momentary gratification no wise man, much less one who had such a reputation for wisdom as Angelo, would commit a sin which would entail upon him everlasting perdition. This is the reasoning of infidelity to overcome the scruples of the weaker minded. It whispers, would such and such incur damnation, if they believed in it? But Claudio, in trying to make his sister an unbeliever, becomes feelingly alive to the consequences of his own sins.



Claud. Death is a fearful thing.
Isab. And shamed life a hateful.
Claud. Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendant world; or to be worse than worst
Of those, that lawless and incertain thoughts
Imagine howling!—'tis too horrible!
The wearied and most loathed worldly life,
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

Claudio wishes to persuade his sister that life is a paradise, and to be bought at any price in comparison with the perchances of after death. First he exclaims like Hamlet as to the total uncertainty of our destination on quitting life, he then takes the materialistic and common idea of death, he then turns to the notions of Dante and the poets, but the words of these are as nothing, he says, compared to the punishments revealed to us; he shudders with revulsion at the thought, and falling into a paroxysm of apprehension, prefers all the ills of life, which Hamlet and the Duke Friar had depicted, to the Christian dread of something after death. But Shakspere must needs express his indignation at the Scripture idea respecting a future state, which Jesus himself delivered. Comparing his imagination with others of the same sort, he condemns it the most strongly, and that there may be no mistake as to his intentions regarding it, he introduces the very language of Jesus, who only had 'imagined howling.' In this he describes the author of Christianity as under no law of right reason, as one of those religious lunatics he mentions in Midsummer Night's Dream, 'incertain' in his thoughts, stamping thereby with uncertainty the whole of the Christian Revelation. That there may be no mistake about the sense in which Shakspere used howling to represent weeping and gnashing of teeth, we may remark that it is the same word he gave to Laertes, when he said the priest would lie howling in the



other world. It is the same word that Falstaff uses, when he says the hostess will howl for eating meat on fast days. It seems to be used in this sense in the Epistles of the New Testament. Who would, after this and the passage in Richard II., say Shakspere was in any sense a Christian?

To the sad picture drawn by Claudio Isabella can only reply, 'alas, alas!' and Claudio is so reduced as to make a dishonourable application to his sister, and consents to purchase his life at the expense of her virtue. Upon this Isabella calls him a 'faithless coward;' and as if his want of faith in the right direction had worked her up to frenzy, she, instead of giving him any hopes of living, tells him she would not do anything to save him from death if she could, but would pray for him to die—with a violence that again shocked the critics. When the Duke asks the nun whether she has some leisure to give him, she says:—

I have no superfluous leisure; my stay must be stolen out of other affairs.

One would not suppose she was going to steal herself away, and give her heart and body to the Friar and the world. Aside, he says to Claudio, you must die, upon which he returns to his original resolution derived from the speech of the Friar:—

I am so out of love with life, that I will sue to be rid of it.
Duke Hold you there: farewell.

The Duke says to Isabella:—

Virtue is bold and goodness never fearful;

which, after the fears of the religious, seems a compliment to his own persuasion; and this is said by way of corollary to his proposition, that Isabella should deceive Angelo and give another maid her place, who had no more than herself lawful and religious right to his person. The Duke, as a friar, is going out of the prison, when he meets the Clown brought in by Elbow and officers. When Elbow has delivered his wisdom on the offence of the Clown, the Duke says:—

O Heavens, what stuff is here?



The Clown says:—

'Twas never merry world, since of two usuries, the merriest was put down, and the worse allowed, by order of law, a furred gown to keep him warm; and furred with fox and lambskin too, to signify that craft, being richer than innocency, stands for the facing.

An apparent satire on Angelo and the Puritans.

The Duke reproves him. He says he would 'prove'—the Duke stops him short:—

Nay, if the devil have given thee proofs for sin, thou wilt prove his.

Escalus says to the Provost:—

Claudio must die to-morrow, let him be furnished with divines.

Pro. So please you, this friar hath been with him, and advised him for the entertainment of death.

Escalus asks him after the state of the prisoner. As religion was not mentioned by the Friar, no answer is made that might be expected from a priest. The Duke tells Escalus that he has given Claudio no hopes of living, and therefore he is resolved to die:—

Esc. You have paid the Heavens your functions, and the prisoner the very debt of your calling.

This was Shakspere's idea of a gaol chaplain and his ministration. Very different from the way in which Christian criminals in England are prepared for death. The Clown is appointed by the Provost assistant to the executioner. The hangman says the former profession of the Clown will discredit his mystery. We can only understand this as a satire on all mysteries sacred and profane, particularly as the hangman only says it is a mystery, and the Clown wants proof, which would do away with the mystery, as faith would be done away by reason.

When the Provost says to them:—

Are you agreed?

Clo. Sir, I will serve him, for I do find your hangman is a more penitent trade than your bawd; he doth oftener ask forgiveness.

Alluding to the custom of executioners asking pardon of the man they kill, but here introduced as a jest of repentance

in general. The Provost tells them to call hither Barnardine and Claudio, who are to die to-morrow :—

One has my pity; not a jot the other,
Being a murtherer.

He has the Duke's pity, if not approbation. To Claudio he says :—

Thou must be made immortal. Where's Barnardine ?

The more wakeful and conscience-stricken Claudio answers :—

As fast locked up in sleep as guiltless labour.
When it lies starkly in the traveller's bones,
He will not wake.

A knocking is heard; the Provost hopes it is a reprieve or pardon for Claudio, but says :—

It is a bitter deputy.
Duke. Not so, not so; his life is parallel'd
Even with the stroke and line of his great justice ;
He doth with holy abstinence subdue
That in himself, which he spurs on his power
To qualify in others.

Now as the Duke knew this was not true, this irony is irony of holiness :—

This is a gentle provost. Seldom when
The steeled gaoler is the friend of men.

Another gaoler, whom Shakspere introduces in Cymbeline, he makes an infidel, and a most moral and virtuous character. The Duke asks about Barnardine what his crime is, and if it is proved ?—

Pro. Most manifest and not denied by himself.
Duke. Hath he borne himself penitently in prison ? How seems he to be touched ?
Prov. A man that apprehends death no more dreadfully but as a drunken sleep; careless, reckless, and fearless of what's past, present, or to come; insensible of mortality and desperately mortal.
Duke. He wants advice.
Prov. He will hear none; he hath evermore had the liberty of the prison; give him leave to escape hence he would not; drunk many times a day, if not many days entirely drunk. We have very



often awaked him, as if to carry him to execution, and shewed him a seeming warrant for it: it hath not moved him at all.

The Duke swears by the vow of his order, by the saint whom he professes, no hurt shall come to the Provost if he delays the execution of Claudio. Provost says:—

Pardon me, good father; it is against my oath.

The Duke says the Provost is so 'fearful,' that neither his 'coat, integrity, nor persuasion can with ease attempt him,' and therefore going further than he meant shows him the hand and seal of the Duke. Having persuaded the Provost, not by his oaths, nor his reasoning about his oath, but by the production of his commission from the Duke, which will absolve him from punishment should the deceit in the exchange of heads practised upon Angelo be found out, the Friar says:—

Call your executioner, and off with Barnardine's head. I will give him a present shrift, and advise him for a better place.

He did not give Claudio 'shrift,' that is absolution; and he could not, as he was not a priest. The Clown seems to have been introduced into the prison, as assistant to the hangman, to make a joke of death and an hereafter, in the person of Barnardine. The Clown says to himself that he meets here all his old mistress' customers:—

All great doers in our trade, and are now for the Lord's sake.

This has puzzled the commentators; but how could they be doers in his trade, for the Lord's sake, unless to reflect on the language of puritanism, which would say they were punished for the Lord's sake? Johnson says it is to ridicule the Puritans, who assumed they were put in prison for the Lord's sake. Whichever it be, it shows no great reverence for Providence, or the religious who were in the habit of attributing good, and the punishment of evil, to the Lord, particularly as it was a divine command to do everything for the Lord's



sake. What ridicule of religion in the Clown to make all these wicked fellows doers for the Lord's sake!

Abhorson. Sirrah, bring Barnardine hither.

The Clown tells him he must 'rise and be hanged.' Barnardine is very unwilling to have his rest interrupted: says he is sleepy.

Abhorson says:—

Tell him he must awake, and that quickly too.

Clo. Pray, Master Barnardine, awake till you are executed, and sleep afterwards.

It will be seen that this sleep afterwards is the thing inculcated by the Clown's wit, which is nothing more, in a jocose strain, than the sentiment of the Friar-Duke. The Clown is in his turn another spiritual adviser, who comes to the same conclusion as the Duke-Friar, only his patient requires no absolution:—

Barnardine. How now, Abhorson? what's the news with you.

Abh. Truly, sir, I would desire you to clap into your prayers; for look you, the warrant's come.

Bar. You rogues, I have been drinking all night, and am not fitted for't.

Upon which the Clown repeats himself, and the Duke:—

O, the better, sir, for he that drinks all night, and is hanged betimes in the morning, may sleep the sounder all next day.

The Clown's remarks are a sort of physical joke on the sleep after death. Sleep is sleep, and the soundest sleep is dead drunk; the same is also to occur after death, whose sleep is not to be broken even by the sound of the last trump.

Abh. Look you, sir, here comes your ghostly father; do we jest now, think you?

Barnardine might have thought so from Abhorson's and the Clown's speeches to him; and the calling the Duke the 'ghostly father' was a jest, if not in the hangman, in Shakspere, who made the Duke make a jest of it, as



far as his being a ghostly father was concerned in his advice to Claudio. There his counsel certainly had gone, as the Provost said of it, to the '*entertainment*' of death in Claudio; and here the prospect was still more merrily entertained:—

Duke. Sir, induced by my charity, and hearing how hastily you are to depart, I am come to advise you, comfort you, and pray with you.

Did necessity of character induce this, or was it not still to jest when he had not given spiritual advice, Christian consolation, or joined in prayer with Claudio?

Bar. Friar, not I. I have been drinking hard all night, and I will have more time to prepare me, or they shall beat out my brain with billets. I will not consent to die this day, that's certain.

Duke. O sir, you must, and therefore I beseech you, look forward on the journey you shall go.

Bar. I swear I will not die to-day for any man's persuasion.

Duke. But hear you——.

Bar. Not a word; if you have anything to say to me, come to my ward, for thence will not I to-day.

The Duke was stopped in what he might have further said on the subject.

Duke. Unfit to live, or die: O, gravel heart!——
After him, fellows; bring him to the block.

Prov. Now, sir, how do you find the prisoner?

Duke. A creature unprepar'd, unmeet for death;
And, to transport him in the mind he is,
Were damnable.

Certainly it was highly reprehensible for a jest, or a deceit, to cut off a man's head twelve hours sooner than the forfeit was due; and though Shakspere did not care, on ordinary occasions, how many, or for what reason men were killed, yet it would not have been consistent with the mercy of the good Duke's character (whose disposition was to please everybody) for his own pleasure to put Barnardine to death. When told by the Provost that the head of a man dead in the prison will do as a substitute for Claudio, he exclaims:—

O, 'tis an accident that Heaven provides.

The 'divinity that shapes our ends' is here brought in as producing an accident. The Duke says, whilst the Provost is sending the head of the dead pirate to Angelo, he will—

Persuade this rude wretch willingly to die.

The Provost says he must die this afternoon. It was only persuading him to die that could be the intention of the Duke. Barnardine did not care about death. His refusal to be executed was only a make jest. If he would not die from persuasion, he would from the more material arguments of billets on his brains. We are not to suppose that the Duke went to execute his supposed office—he had plenty of other occupations on hand. He was pressed for time. He does not appear to see Barnardine more till he comes before him to be pardoned. In this part Shakspere illustrates a position often taken by infidels—that the fear of the future has no influence on criminals, and often, as in the case of Barnardine, they are not so natured as to be capable of receiving religious impressions.

Shakspere, in conjunction with Providence, does not suffer harm to reach Barnardine, who is saved from afternoon execution. He is reproduced at the end of the play to have his sentiments rewarded by a share in the general happiness—a trouble which Shakspere seldom takes to save the innocent, or point the moral to his tale. No doubt Shakspere thought the episode would produce a comic effect amidst the gravity of the prison, give mirth to an audience made of very imprisonable materials, and whose hopes of an hereafter were not very sanguine; but what can we think of an author who would produce roars of laughter by denying and jesting on a future state, except that he did not believe in it, or care whether it was believed in by others? In a religious man, or one bearing the habit of a friar, where everything was carried on suitable to the necessities of character, the solemn deceit which this holy man plays upon Isabella would scarcely be allowed. He assures her



that her brother is released from the world; and when she says 'it is not so,' and he answers 'it is,' he tells her, as a philosopher, to show her wisdom in her patience, not as a priest to a nun, or one Christian to another. She does not profit by his philosophy, and seems to have forgotten her religion. As a woman she declares of Angelo that she will 'pluck out his eyes'—and that he is 'most damned.'

Duke. This not hurts him, nor profits you a jot;
Forbear it therefore, give your cause to Heaven.

This may be a very good moral reason why we should not trouble ourselves about the injuries we have received, but it is not a religious one, and it points to the destruction of the hope that good may be rewarded, and the bad punished hereafter.

Subsequent to this we have the Duke recommending to Isabella, as a 'good path,' a path of gross deceit, and the nun consents to walk therein, bringing discredit on both parties and professions.

Without greater space devoted to this play than would be proportionate, we could not explain the variety of incidents of duplicity, falsehood, and irreverence which the Friar, nun, and others exhibit throughout the remainder of this drama. In the last part, in the imagined death of Claudio, consoling Isabella, the Duke says:—

That life is better life, past fearing death,
Than that which lives to fear; make it your comfort;
So happy is your brother.
An Angelo for Claudio; death for death.
Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure;
Like doth quit like, and Measure still for Measure.

This is the *lex talionis* of the old, and of all human, but not of divine law, which, according to the scheme of the play, is shadowed forth. The Duke, when Mariana implores him to spare the life of her husband, speaks the reality of the trick she had played:—

Consenting to the safeguard of your honour,
I thought your marriage fit, else imputation,
For that he knew you, might reproach your life,
And choak your good to come.

Though the Duke says Mariana does, against all sense, importune Isabella to speak for Mariana's husband, and makes a joke of immortal spirits by declaring that it would bring Claudio's ghost from the grave, if Isabella did join in asking mercy for Angelo—yet the nun is persuaded by the argument of Mariana, according to the vulgar proverb—'the greater the sinner the greater the saint:'—

Mari. Isabel,
Sweet Isabel, do yet but kneel by me;
Hold up your hands, say nothing; I'll speak all.——
They say, best men are moulded out of faults;
And, for the most, become much more the better
For being a little bad; so may my husband.

To which the nun and sister answers:—

Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd,
As if my brother liv'd. I partly think
A due sincerity govern'd his deeds,
Till he did look on me; since it is so,
Let him not die. My brother had but justice,
In that he did the thing for which he died
For Angelo.
His act did not o'ertake his bad intent;
And must be buried but as an intent,
That perish'd by the way: thoughts are no subjects:
Intents, but merely thoughts.

Johnson says—'The Duke has justly observed, that Isabella is importuned against all sense, against all reason and natural affection, to solicit for Angelo; yet here, against all sense, she solicits for him. Her argument is extraordinary. That Angelo had committed all the crimes charged against him, as far as he could commit them, is evident. The only intent which his act did not overtake, was the defilement of Isabel. Of this Angelo was only intentionally guilty.' The sentence, which is the argument Johnson thinks extraordinary, is really the argument of the necessitarians; he was very well, till he could not help being bad; it was not his fault, but the fault of the circumstances in which he was placed. The Duke continues the deceit between him and the Provost; 'leaving poor Isabel to think that Providence hath interposed for such a



rascal as Barnardine, whilst it had left her brother to his fate.' Barnardine, justly condemned to die for a great crime, lived, whilst her brother had been unjustly executed for a small or no offence. As there was no necessity to mention him, so being mentioned there was no necessity to have him brought in. Though the Duke had disclosed the part he played as a friar, which Angelo had been quick enough in seeing, yet the Duke still continues to profess ignorance, even to the knowledge of Barnardine:—

Duke. Which is that Barnardine?

Prov. This, my lord.

Duke. There was a friar told me of this man:—
Sirrah, thou art said to have a stubborn soul,
That apprehends no further than this world,
And squar'st thy life according. Thou'rt condemn'd;
But, for those early faults, I quit them all;
And pray thee, take this mercy to provide
For better times to come;——Friar, advise him:
I leave him to your hand.

Here, after all the discourses of the Duke tending to materialism, is an unblushing infidel produced, to be publicly proclaimed as such, and in consequence of it to merit the attentions and receive the pardon of the Duke for murder. There is no doubt, we think, that Shakspere intended the Duke as the model male character of his play, and that he coincided with his sentiments and feelings from his first to his final speech and action. But there is a tone of equivocating irony about these words of the Duke, which, while it may keep the author safe within the statute and the law of public opinion, may express more infidelity to those who have ears to hear. Whenever we speak of 'better times to come,' we always mean success in society. It is the common language of the world to talk of 'better times.' The consistency of the Duke's logic would be committed by any thought of the world to come. Elsewhere Shakspere uses the same language relating to this world. The Duke, however, speaks as a polite atheist of the present day towards a criminal—he leaves Barnardine to the hands of the priest. In Troilus and Cressida, the phrase 'the world to come' is used for future times.

We think Shakspere, in the conduct of the Duke towards Angelo and Barnardine, by his long affected refusal of pardon to the one, and immediately granting it to the other for the same crime, intended to make a marked difference between the one who covered his crimes with his religion, and the other who did not deny his crime, and did not care about the consequences. This was an additional touch of Shakspere's, to show his aversion to religion and preference of vice without hypocrisy.

Mr. Knight does not take notice, in his edition, of those who have not allowed themselves to pass over Shakspere's avowed infidelity in Measure for Measure. For instance, he says nothing on the passage denying a future state, or of Johnson, who so vehemently expresses his indignation at it. Twice in that speech he tries to turn aside the irreligious vein of Shakspere to the fancy of something pious. Mr. Knight has a supplementary notice, but gives no hint of it in the notes or illustrations. Side by side with the text, it would be rather difficult to misdirect the judgment of the reader.

Mr. Knight heads his notice with a picture of a star, a shepherd and his flock, and under it the words 'the unfolding star.' Shakspere announced, in the poetical language usual with him, that the morning was coming, and he put it in the mouth of the Duke, who taught in the prison there was nothing to fear or nothing to hope for beyond the grave. Innocent as was the Duke of unfolding Mr. Knight's star, he is represented as introducing the consolations of religion, which we remarked the Duke, personating a friar, naturally should have done to the condemned to die. By these words he says that Shakspere conveys us from prison scenes to a splendid prospect of nature, on which he founds the following remark:—'In the same way, throughout this very extraordinary drama, in which the whole world is represented as one great prison house, full of passion, and ignorance, and sorrow, we have glimpses every now and then of something beyond, where there shall be no alternations of mildness and severity, but a condition of equal justice, serene as the valley under "the unfolding star," and about to rejoice in the day spring.'



It would be supererogatory, where there is no reason given in support of it, to argue more against such an assertion.

Having selected some other passages where religion might be inferred, Mr. Knight proceeds to say—'There is something deeper in them than the power of expressing a moral observation, strikingly, and poetically. They are imbued with the writer's philosophy. They form part of the system upon which the play is written.' Having then done all in his power to neutralise it, he is obliged to come to the unpleasant confession, that 'Opposed to passages like these, there are many single sentences scattered through this drama, which, so far from dwelling on with pleasure, we hurry past—we like not to look upon again, which appear to be mere grossnesses. These sentences are, nevertheless, an integral portion of the drama—they also form a part of the 'system' upon which the play is written. What is true of single passages is true of single scenes. After praising some scenes, Mr. Knight adds—'There are other scenes which appear simply revolting, such as those in which the Clown is conspicuous; and even Barnardine, one of the most extraordinary of Shakspere's creations, will produce little beyond disgust in the casual reader. But these have, nevertheless, not crept into this drama by accident, certainly not from the desire "to make the unskilful" laugh. Perhaps the effect of their introduction, coupled with the general subject of the dramatic action, is to render the entire comedy not pleasurable. Coleridge says, "this play, which is Shakspere's throughout, is to me the most painful,—say, rather, the only painful part of his genuine works." This is a strong opinion, and, upon the whole, a just one. But it requires explanation.'

It will be perceived by the reader that when Mr. Knight objects to the profanity of a passage, there is 'deep satire in it.' What appears upon the surface to everybody is, on Mr. Knight's hypothesis, something different. Johnson may at least be conceded to have as much religious sagacity as Knight. It is easy to call that critic bigotted, but it is not easy to deny the justice of his religious strictures, without at the same time denying Christianity.

We have, at least partially, if not successfully, endeavoured to give intelligibility to Shakspere; and though we may have sometimes fallen into wrong conclusions, we think, by comparison, there is much ground of truth in our theories of Shakspere's philosophy, from our not having to adopt these vague generalities, or far-fetched instances of our poet's modern critics. Observe how Mr. Knight would put the objections to passages in Measure for Measure, solely to their 'grossness,' and not to their infidelity, though the grossness admitted is here combined with the want of religion. The Quarterly Reviewer contends that it is generally an unmistakable mark of scepticism. 'Simply revolting' is a strong term; and if we might sound the depths of Mr. Knight, we would say only used when he had struck against the rocks of irreligion. He talks of a higher aim answered than dramatic effect. By higher aim is meant religion, but this is a way of speaking rather convenient than candid. The scope of Mr. Knight's succeeding observations appear to be, that the whole aim of Shakspere was to exalt Isabella as the representative of religion, and all the other characters, scenes, passages, sentences, were but dark colourings of the painter to bring the heroine out in light—a Rembrandt style of execution. He says, 'what general truths may be enunciated, she declares the higher truth; she is as a heavenly messenger—the foundation of her character is religion.' 'Shakspere has,' he says, 'based her virtue, most unquestionably, upon the very highest principle upon which any virtue can be built.' The character of Angelo, he says, is the antagonist to that of Isabella. He wanted the one sustaining principle by which Isabella was upheld. He calls him 'the sanctimonious deputy;' and again, speaking of Isabella, he styles her 'the only true moral character of the whole drama.' In other ways has Mr. Knight tried to depreciate the Duke, by speaking approvingly of what he calls a random hit of Chalmers coming near the truth, that the character of the Duke is a very accurate delineation of King James. This would excite contempt instead of the respect which we are sure Shakspere intended us to have for the Duke. Shakspere might so far serve his interests as to say that slandering a prince deserves whipping and hanging, and this,



without adjudging it, was the farthest extent of his political complaisance.

We have now noticed many circumstances in this play which have not a little puzzled the critics, and which our theory of Shakspere's sentiments and philosophy readily explains. We have considered our poet as a man surrounded by mortal circumstances, without which, as Hume remarks in his history, we cannot come to a proper judgment of Shakspere and his works. He was greatly exalted in Hume's time, and Knight has elevated his worship into a religion; but it is still instructive to look at our literary deity through the spectacles of truth.



OTHELLO.

ACCORDING to the order in which Campbell places the plays of Shakspere, Measure for Measure is succeeded by Othello. The title, Measure for Measure, expressive not of justice, but revenge, would serve as the indicator of the motives in Othello. There are coincidents in expressions and sentiments, which may strike those who read the two plays, the one after the other, and that order of producing them may have given rise to the analogous points in the author's mind. The chief objection to this play has been, that Shakspere has not given sufficient motives to Iago, who weaves the plot, and produces the catastrophe. But Shakspere, particularly in the first act, shows an anxiety to supply such motives. Retaliation for injuries, real or supposed, mixed up with a good deal of envy, and a bad disposition, blindly impel Iago to schemes of revenge. He had the mortification of seeing his own merit set aside, and Cassio's preferred. Iago was a brave and experienced soldier, with a character for honesty, which could not have been acquired without worth, while Cassio was but a theorist in the art of war, owing his advancement to interest. Causes of this kind, we know in modern times, have maddened some men into assassins. But Iago thought he had received much greater provocations than those enumerated. Both Othello, who had been instrumental in forwarding the views of Cassio, and Cassio, who had wrested from him the objects of his ambition, were thought by him to have profited by the infidelity of his wife. Shakspere seems to have intended to give some warrant to these suspicions, in representing Emilia rather free in her behaviour and language as regarded the virtue of chastity. Iago therefore wished Othello to feel towards his Desdemona the poison which he says gnawed his vitals at the thought of the relation between Othello and his wife, and



by the same means to have Cassio punished, as the seducer, who had likewise, he imagined, made his wife commit error. Envy he felt at the good fortune of the Moor in obtaining so high a rank in the state, and having made so illustrious and happy an alliance by marriage. He had the justice to admit that politically the Moor was deserving of his eminence, but he might naturally look with some contempt on one of Othello's race, who had risen so high, whilst he remained so low. No previous demerit of Iago's is pointed out, either as a soldier, or in honesty, or trustworthiness; and Shakspere has painted him with high intellectual powers, all which might reasonably create in him, by comparison, a contempt for such 'an ass' as Othello, or such a raw soldier as Cassio; so unfitted for any post, that on the first occasion he allowed his senses to be stolen away by wine, and afterwards his reputation to be made a mockery of in the streets by a woman of the town, in attending whom he nearly meets with his death. If people have not observed this touch of morality in Shakspere as to this latter point, they will find that he makes Iago allude to it. We say Othello was an ass, because Iago, as such, says he was to be led by the nose; and we think Shakspere designedly paints him as only excellent in war, credulous and superstitious from first to last, and jealous to a degree of insanity. We think Cassio to be meant for one of those novices, who, in all aristocratical communities, supersede the veteran, and allows the vices or follies of his former habits of life and station from whence he is taken to make him incapable of discharging the functions to which he is suddenly elevated, and in which he has had no experience. We think Shakspere continues this satire to the last, when he makes Cassio be put over the head of Othello, for no cause, notwithstanding the evidence of his unfitness for the office. But all this is done to give motives to Iago, and to show that a man who might have continued what he seemed, and what he had been, may sink under the injustice and the injuries of the world, and die contented in causing universal misery. Shakspere gives motives for making sacrifice of Desdemona. Generally he makes Iago uncertain as to the final issue, and particularly he puts into the mouth of Iago a sort of remorse for Desde-

mona. But if not a moral, Shakspere takes care to apply a stroke of retributive justice to Desdemona. We are told by her father that from the deceit and disobedience she had shewn to him, who would have guided her choice, or made that choice happy had she won his consent—that no good could be expected from the match. In consequence of this he dies broken-hearted, which is announced when the evils occur which he foreboded.

The insufficiency of motive has been found fault with in other plays of Shakspere; for instance, in Lear, some have said that the old man had not cause enough, in the behaviour of his daughters, to exhibit the rage which destroyed him. This charge against Shakspere seems to us satisfactorily answered, by observing that in making all wrong, when tragic consequences ensued, a moral was obtained. Evil attended, and punishment arose from the smallest as well as the greatest dereliction from right. Thus in Othello and Lear all parties caused, and all felt the consequences of wrong. It has been observed, too, that in this Shakspere has followed the ancient Greek dramatists; and also it may be said that he fulfilled in this the double purpose, common to himself and them, of shewing an uncontrollable fate. It may be said even of Othello, that he was not fitted for the marriage state—that he was in the vale of years—that, according to his own account, he was much happier as a bachelor, and the way in which he obtained Desdemona would have excited scruples in some delicate minds. He ought hardly to have consented to run away with a loved daughter, and effect a match so disproportionate, but with the agreement of all parties. But here was the destiny of the man, and what a concatenation of circumstances produced the deplorable results. Othello, whose only thought had been war and adventures by sea and land, who had never been a chamberer, against his own apparent will is the victim of the love of woman, which, when once felt, banishes all forethought, all previous resolution, and makes him at once subject to a cross tide of events. Iago's feelings are roused and directed by this climax to the earthly felicity of Othello. A war occurs, and withdraws Othello, at the entrance of his new life, into his old pursuits and ways of thinking—he is not

allowed a moment to cement the union of domestic relations. Then Iago is defeated in his ambition by Cassio, who affects the ancient just again on the tender point on which Othello's fate turns. The father, Roderigo, Emilia, are but subordinates in the action, yet out of them arise, directly or indirectly, the causes which flow together to pitch Othello from his heaven to the lowest depths of hell.

We have said there are many passing resemblances in Othello and Measure for Measure. The philosophy and irreligion in Measure for Measure we thought were expressed more strongly than in any other play. In Othello we shall not find them so broadly characterised. But we meet with attacks upon Providence, which abound in so many of his plays, and, to us, there are two very evident intentions to ridicule revealed religion.

In the introductory scene, where Iago gives his reasons for hating Othello, he says, Cassio is a fellow 'almost damned in a fair wife.' If this be taken literally as it is spoken, Shakspere additionally damns him by his connection with Bianca. It may be said, how then could Iago talk to him of marrying Bianca? Shakspere did not seem always to care for discrepancies, or either Bianca might suppose that Cassio could get a divorce, or she being only mentioned at Cyprus, might think he was disengaged. If he carried Bianca publicly about with him on his first expedition, as a half wife who damned him at Venice, and damned him at Cyprus; his not being able to forswear women on the proper occasion any more than wine, did not improve his character, but showed him the more unfit for his situation. Iago says in justice he cannot love the Moor, but follows him to serve his turn upon him. Honesty, he says, towards others, meets with the worst reward. He then comes to a point of agreement with Measure for Measure—he avows that worldly hypocrisy, without which a man is treated as a fool. Roderigo says Othello owes fortune a fall for his success in having carried off Desdemona—upon which turns so many of Shakspere's dramas, and the two immediately begin to work the wheel of fortune. Iago says to Brabantio:—

Sir, you are one of those that will not serve God, if the Devil bid you.

Bra. What profane wretch art thou?

What a profane writer Shakspere would be thought, if the profanity of his sentiments were admitted, which the characters themselves utter. Surely he ought to be allowed to be the best judge of his own profanity, and the censure he puts in the mouth of a sober citizen ought to be a fair criterion of such passages which abound in his work.

Shakspere makes Iago say of Othello:—

> Tho' I do hate him as I do hell pains,
> Yet, for necessity of present life,
> I must shew out a flag and sign of love;
> Which is, indeed, but sign.

Had not necessity cast their lives together, and made it impossible for Iago to withdraw from these circumstances, or had Iago had the option of extricating himself at this turn in his affairs, which Roderigo put to him, he would have been a better man, and the deplorable events which followed would not have happened. It appears to us that Shakspere gives patient attention to all these touches to account philosophically, as well as dramatically, for such a character as Iago; and, indeed, we think he endeavours to produce sympathy for the villain. In that he would but follow a feeling which we have seen strong in the last play—charity towards sinners, founded on the philosophy of necessity. We feel for Brabantio in his loss:—

> *Bra.* It is too true an evil. Gone she is;
> And what's to come of my despised time,
> Is nought but bitterness.

In these first words and early signs of a broken heart, and his withdrawal to die, we see an example of and comment upon the Duke's speech in Measure for Measure, 'We have no friends,' &c. Othello, in his first speech to Iago, speaks more largely of his love of celibacy than he does of Desdemona and marriage. Shakspere brings in the very words of the law of James against witchcraft. He shows how impossible appear the acts of nature to those who do not trust to natural causes. He makes the Duke of Venice at once silence the accusations of Brabantio by a speech, which,

delivered from the judges, and kept in mind by them, would have saved us the pain of finding a Hale condemning witches to death :—

> *Duke.* To vouch this is no proof,
> Without more wider and more overt test,
> Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods
> Of modern seeming do prefer against him.

Shakspere had a mind to be jocose at the time on something as modern as witchcraft. These were the relations of his friend Raleigh, as of wonderous cannibals—of men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders, whom Raleigh said he had heard of. In making Othello aver them as facts coming within his own experience, he probably wished to show the bombast of Othello. From his own relation there was some art exercised in making her love, and from his own observation there were periods when he might have stopped from encouraging her affections. When Othello says 'she swore' Steevens has objected that it was not very feminine in her. It may, with more justice, we think, be objected, that she parts without endeavouring to conciliate her father. Othello says, before the Duke and Senate, that Iago is a man of honesty and trust, calls him 'honest Iago;' but it does not appear that Iago was under any obligation to him for the reward of his services. Yet he throws the incident in to fulfil his fate of commissioning Iago to take care of his wife, and the additional one of praying Iago to let Emilia attend upon Desdemona, which the more provoked the feeling and gave Iago the occasion of revenge.

We have said that Shakspere often speaks for and against suicide. Here he makes the fool, Roderigo, speak in favour of suicide, and the villain, Iago, say that we had much better take death seeking the accomplishment of our passions.

Shakspere puts into the mouth of Roderigo a sententious saying, which embodies all the argument in favour of suicide; and is, in fact, partly an abridgement of the reasons for death of the Duke to Claudio, and seems to arise from the recollection of it.

Rod. It is silliness to live, when to live is torment: and then we have a prescription to die when death is our physician.

This is too well said, we think, not to have been Shakspere's own sentiment. Iago treats it with ridicule :—

If thou wilt needs damn thyself do it a more delicate way than drowning * * * seek thou rather to be hanged in compassing thy joy, than to be drowned and go without her.

Shakspere, by putting Iago in juxta-position with Roderigo, shews to advantage his superior powers of intellect, and his determined force of will. On Roderigo's loss of all hope, and committing himself to despair, Iago gives that speech that compares man, as he has been compared before by Shakspere, to a garden, producing the fruits of the seeds with which it is sown. Virtue he declares neither innate nor external—'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus.' There is a balance, he says, between the intellectual and the moral qualities, and the passions, which must be kept even. Here is a villain talking Combe's Constitution of Man. We cannot expect Iago to tell us of any power above who has made us or predestined us to any particular purpose. Neither for good nor evil has he anything supernatural in his philosophy. Though the will is mentioned, we think Shakspere has guarded against its being supposed to be free will, by putting it in opposition to all idea of abstract virtue, and making what we are, wholly dependent on circumstances which surround us. It may be said that this is no relevant argument, because it is the remark addressed by a villain to a fool, to persuade him, at the expense of virtue, to look forward to happiness in further vice. In the same way it may be said that Iago's arguments against suicide are only suitable to the purpose. Iago was no philosopher, he spoke to character and occasion, and therefore we cannot look to him for a lecture on morals. It may be said, we think, of Othello, and universally of Shakspere's plays, what Professor Grabstein, in Fraser for September, 1845, has said, recommends Hamlet so much to the German mind—'Its disbelief in the efficiency or utility of any real acts of individual resolve.' We are to trust to circumstances, and that, as Iago says :—

There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered.

Should the passage be unquestionably admitted to be in favour of free will, we come to our test of Shakspere's opinions—he has more often declared himself in support of necessity. In Hamlet, who is a more abstract philosophical character, Shakspere introduces a speech on necessity; and though so difficult a subject, he has stated it clearly, and went out of his way to produce it, when Hamlet was speaking of drunkenness and waiting for the Ghost. Iago seems hardly to know what are his resolves or their results:—

> The Moor is of a free and open nature,
> That thinks men honest that but seem to be so;
> And will as tenderly be led by th' nose,
> As asses are.
> I hav't—it is engender'd—Hell and night
> Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

The language of Cassio is rather affected and suitable to the gallantry of a person who thinks himself a favourite with the ladies, and seems to us certainly put in contrast to the robust diction of the Moor. Shakspere painted Cassio what Othello says he could not be, a chamberer. Cassio begins with a hyperbolical report of Desdemona, ending:—

> And in the essential vesture of creation
> Does tire the ingener.

This has puzzled the commentators, and is said by them to be meant for the poet. We think it rather an irreverent exaggeration of the labour of the Maker of mankind in producing such a piece of perfection. The word ingener, from engine, Knight says, 'according to Richardson, denotes great effort of genius, of ingenuity, of contrivance.' This Cassio, in the same strain of hyperbole, speaks of Desdemona as a divinity, of her beauty having power over the elements, who, conscious of her presence, were subject to her and suspended their natural attributes in her passage from Venice to Cyprus. He supplicates the 'great Jove' to guard Othello, where he might have used at least Providence, rather than the pagan deity on such an occasion. On her being saved in the storm, the Cypriots are to worship her on their knees; and for Cassio's self, he welcomes her by a mode of salutation

usual to sacred personages—and turning grace into a poetical image, says:—

> Hail to thee, lady! and the grace of heaven,
> Before, behind thee, and on every hand
> Enwheel thee round.

In behaviour, he is as foppish as in speech, and to give colour to the suspicions of Iago, kisses Iago's wife, and says, it is his breeding that makes him so bold. When Emilia provokes Iago to retort upon her, he says of women:—

> Saints in your injuries, devils being offended.

Under the show of piety, they wreak their vengeance on their enemies. Iago, when asked to praise, says, 'I am nothing if not critical,' which may be said generally of Shakspere in his remarks on philosophy and religion; but where the subject is a matter of faith and not of reason, criticism is not deemed good taste. Indeed, where he exercises his criticism upon women, Desdemona says he is profane and licentious, which speaks the character of criticism more especially on religion. Cassio tells Desdemona Iago is no scholar, but his natural wit is certainly made much superior to Cassio's acquired learning, polished manner, and language. The courtship of Cassio to Desdemona, as Iago calls it, appears both ridiculous and rather too gallant on his part. Desdemona was not discreet in permitting it.

Iago calls him 'a fly.' Taking her by the palm, smiling, whispering together, and kissing hands to her, denote the actions and want of caution usual to a giddy creature.

Othello speaks, in pagan style, of the happiness of meeting again his Desdemona, as if there was nothing beyond this life:—

> If I were now to die,
> 'Twere now to be most happy; for, I fear,
> My soul hath her content so absolute,
> That not another comfort like to this
> Succeeds in unknown fate.

It is with some truth, therefore, that Iago says to Roderigo after this scene, that if Desdemona ceases to love the Moor, Cassio stands in the way of fortune with her; that he is very

voluble, that he has no conscience as to women, that he can put on the form of civil and human seeming, the better to compass affection; that he is a finder of occasions, very conceited, besides having the advantages of youth and beauty—qualities agreeable to women. He at least speaks the truth of his own opinion and of appearances. When left to himself, Iago says:—

> That Cassio loves her, I do well believe;
> That she loves him, 'tis apt, and of great credit.
> Now, I love her too,
> Not out of absolute lust, (though, peradventure,
> I stand accountant for as great a sin.)

Does this mean that he who looketh breaks the commandment, and, therefore, he is equally guilty? But his feeling, he says, proceeds more from a desire of revenge, which he may mean is as great a sin as lust of her from love, and this thought of his wife's infidelity with Othello, Iago continues:—

> Like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards;
> And nothing can, or shall content my soul,
> Till I am even with him, wife for wife,
> Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
> At last into a jealousy so strong,
> That judgment cannot cure.

Cassio shall be the occasion of his malice, who has done him the same wrong. This is not the revenge produced in the catastrophe:—

> I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip.
> Abuse him to the Moor in the right garb,
> For I fear Cassio with my night-cap too,
> Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me
> For making him egregiously an ass,
> And practising upon his peace and quiet,
> Even to madness. 'Tis here but yet confus'd;
> Knavery's plain face is never seen till us'd.

We see here Shakspere's objects more plainly revealed. A man once possessed with the idea that he is the injured party, he foregoes all virtues, real and seeming, and the gratification of other passions, for the desire of revenge. Strict honour in money matters was not a point at all insisted upon

by the dramatists of the Elizabethan age. Iago seems to have shared Roderigo's purse from the first, as Falstaff says the rich are to be made the prey of the poor. Reduced to necessity, as he thought, by the injustice which did not reward his labours, he had no scruple to live upon his friend. But in the end he sacrifices his friend's life as well as his property to the one engrossing passion of his soul. When morals were not very rigid with regard to women, Shakspere might be willing to show not only that this gallantry produced all sorts of evils, but that Iago and Othello were equally fools, and the jealousy and the infidelity of their wives did them no real harm as long as they were not certain of it. In the satisfaction of Iago's revenge, Shakspere would not only show the consequences of injustice to a man, but, in the wild justice of revenge, how a man may be drawn on from one crime to another, and drag himself to perdition as well as his victims. Othello tells Cassio, on taking leave for the night personally, that he is to look to the guard and to learn discretion, as if he did not possess it. The way in which Cassio answers does not promise well. He says another, Iago, hath direction what to do; and not making application of Othello's remark at all to himself, says, nevertheless, he will look after the others, the guard. Cassio speaks to Iago in rather a silly way of Desdemona. Iago says of Roderigo, the love of Desdemona has 'almost turned him the wrong side out,' he has drunk 'potations pottle deep,' and all the rest are drunk. None appear intoxicated but Cassio, who, from the first, appeals to heaven as his oath in witness of their follies 'Fore heaven'—when Iago asks him whether he will hear his song again. He first wishes to shew to them that he knows the duties of his situation better than they do:—

Cas. No: for I hold him to be unworthy of his place that does those things.

Iago having shown this unworthiness, Cassio drunk is shown to have a sentiment of religion:—

Cas. Well, heaven's above all; and there be souls must be saved, and there be souls that must not be saved.

Iago. It's true, good lieutenant.

This seems to arise from the pride of Cassio, and to occur to him as a censure of Iago in singing, that he can't help it, he must be damned. Was not this 'must' an especial sneer at predestination? After this allurement of Iago's, the especial pride of Cassio, his own good opinion of himself, comes out more distinctly, which makes him think himself above the general—if not here, at least hereafter. A pride of the times, which must have often offended Shakspere, was a contempt of sinners and a supercilious pity of the pious towards their lost state.

Cas. For mine own part, no offence to the general, nor any man of quality. I hope to be saved.

This idea of priority in salvation is mixed up with a ludicrous reverence for this world. Iago pricks on the lieutenant to a further expression of his pride. When Iago answers:—

And so do I, too, lieutenant.

Cas. Ay, but, by your leave, not before me.

The lieutenant is to be saved before the ancient. Not only in this world, but in the next, he was to have precedence of the ancient, who was damned here, and, therefore, ought to be hereafter—which could not be a gratifying recollection and impression to Iago. Cassio then tries to attend to his duties, and reminds the guards of theirs. His words are mixed up with the thoughts of his short comings before heaven as well as on earth, and Shakspere thinks fit to introduce part of the Lord's prayer, forgive us our sins, as season to the mirth of a drunkard. He knows well enough, too, his rank—'this is my ancient.' The impression left upon the Cypriots, that he is unworthy of his place and care of them, is not removed, though he is made governor over them. It is increased, if anything, by succeeding casualties. Montano is mentioned by Othello as a very different character from Cassio. He says, in answer to the reproaches of the general:—

Nor know I ought
By me that's said or done amiss this night,
Unless self-charity be sometimes a vice,
And to defend ourselves it be a sin,
When violence assails us.

This inculcation of defending ourselves from injuries is that which Shakspere introduces so often. He teaches, there is a charity due to ourselves as well as love to others. Cassio speaks very spiritually about his 'reputation' being the 'immortal' part of him, which is not religion in a believer, though often affirmed by Shakspere. Iago answers very materially, 'I thought you had a wound.' Cassio has two devils. The invisible spirit of wine he calls the devil, and wrath another devil. He says, in a religious tone, every inordinate cup is unblessed, and the ingredient is a devil—an idea which Goethe has realised in some of his spiritual matter-of-fact performances. The answer of Iago, according to Shakspere's character, was much more akin to his sentiments—'Come, come, good wine is a good familiar creature, if it be well used; exclaim no more against it.' Iago says, that Othello is given up to the contemplation and devotion of Desdemona, adding:—

> And then for her
> To win the Moor, were't to renounce his baptism,
> All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,
> His soul is so enfetter'd to her love,
> That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
> Even as her appetite shall play the god
> With his weak function.

We think it irreverent in a supposed Christian, before a Christian public, to represent a man as renouncing Christianity for a woman, and allowing his wife to supplant his God. Iago proceeds:—

> Divinity of hell!
> When devils will their blackest sins put on,
> They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
> As I do now.

In other words, religion is only a mask for sin. This might have been let alone, as Iago only pretended honesty and sincerity and practised cunning; he was rather profane than pious. Iago tells Roderigo they work by wit and not by witchcraft, and wit depends on dilatory time. The slow progress of natural cause and effect is here opposed to the despatch which would wait on supernaturalism. The music with

which Cassio entertains Othello and his wife in the morning is consistent with the character of the fine gentleman, but not agreeable to the general, who pays the musicians to be rid of their noise. We think this a touch of Shakspere, consonant with the idea we think he had of Cassio. A man of more sober metal, touched with the misfortunes of the night, would scarcely think of music so early in the morning, as an introduction to his suit for pardon for his offences. But it was more and more agreeable to the manners of the chamberer. The clown is brought in to give the ridicule to it, in which Cassio makes a sorry figure. Next Iago, who finds Cassio never went to bed, but went on this errand of the music, adds his derision to it. It seems to have produced more accord in Desdemona, as she, according to Emilia, already unsolicited, had been pleading his cause with Othello, who had said he should not be directed by his wisdom, but his love in restoring Cassio to his forfeited situation. The case made so plain, it seems a fresh folly in Cassio, and a needless inadventure in Desdemona, pressing his immediate return to office. Shakspere may have wished to satirise the interference of women and favourites in public affairs, who would have those in power to please them, though they offend the public sense of propriety. Cassio tells Desdemona he is her true servant, without making any profession of his faith, under all circumstances, to Othello.

In the dialogue between Othello and Iago, when Iago sows the seed of jealousy in the general's mind, which come up at once to full growth, there is a good deal in what Iago says of jealousy which seems a justification of himself. What he says about money, the insignificance of its loss, but the great loss of a good name, may be particularly applied to himself in the absence of remuneration for his services, which is nothing to the general discredit which he has fallen under in having a wife unfaithful to him. It also applies to the little regard which he showed to money matters, which, in despising them, made him think little of appropriating the purse of others to himself. This is said to be the history of many a bad character—they first are cheated, and then become swindlers. Doubly wronged, as he thought, in purse and name, Iago would execute double injury in revenge.

Iago speaks as Hamlet did of the thoughts of man, in whose breast, however pure, the worst must pass. He himself is depicted as never having been more bad than in thought, until the foul stuff of his bosom, the uncleanly apprehensions sitting in meditations lawful, are driven by circumstances into acts.

In those heartfelt exclamations on jealousy, we cannot but think Iago was meant to portray what he had felt, and that he knew all its qualities by experience. When he speaks of hypocrisy, of Desdemona who deceived her father in marrying him, who so young could give out such a seeming to seal her father's eyes up, that he thought it witchcraft, who loved most when she seemed to fear—all this seems to show Shakspere fresh from the writing of Measure for Measure, where men are what they are in thought if not in act, and only need occasion to be what they are. This leads to the philosophy of nature, which will produce its effects, if operated on by causes.

> *Oth.* And yet, how nature, erring from itself.
> *Iago.* Ay, there's the point.

He says, her love for Othello was contrary to the tendency of all things in nature and he fears :—

> Her will, recoiling to her better judgment,
> May fail to match you with her country forms,
> And, haply so, to repent.

Here are natural causes working to contrary effects—the judgment of one time and the will of another are both the same. Shakspere, in this play, does not seem to think we are masters of ourselves, and to be of opinion that superior natures are more exposed to those extraordinary causes and effects in thought and action, which often produce social irregularities, nay, crimes in great men. In sympathy with the philosophy deducible from Shakspere, and the learned spirit of Iago, Othello says of the growing passions he feels mastering his nature :—

> Yet 'tis the plague of great ones;
> Prerogativ'd are they less than the base;
> 'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death.
> Ev'n then, this forked plague is fated to us,
> When we do quicken.

Shakspere has said that the heavens mock us, but he makes Othello say, on the entrance of Desdemona, that the heavens mocked themselves in the production of such a creature if she be unfaithful.

When Emilia says she will give the handkerchief to Iago:—

> What he'll do with it,
> Heaven knows, not I;
> I nothing but to please his fantasy;

it is not only stupidly immoral, but is levity. Iago says of the use he will make of this handkerchief:—

> Trifles, light as air,
> Are, to the jealous, confirmations strong
> As proofs of holy writ.

Some of the moral observations about truth and honesty are no doubt dictated from a true knowledge of the world in Shakspere. Othello is already poisoned in the very sensations which Iago, we observed, spoke as if he himself had had experience of them.

Othello says he blows his love to heaven, and, at the same time, he calls upon vengeance to arise from hell; and in pursuance of it says:—

> —— Now, by yond marble heaven,
> In the due reverence of a sacred vow,
> I here engage my words.——
> *Iago.* Do not rise yet.

Why should this author always make vengeance a matter of religion? If they would act on the supposed justification of their passions, they at least could do it without introducing religion as a party to it. Othello intended, perhaps, to be superstitious, is about to rise from his knees; the profane Iago falls upon his, parodies Othello and religion in a speech rather more material. Iago has satisfied his revenge in seeing the working of the poison he had felt. He is commissioned by Othello to kill Cassio, which he had not contemplated, and he asks the life of Desdemona, whose death he certainly had never thought of. In return for his services, in the execution of his own plot, he obtains the object of his ambition—the lieutenantcy. Love towards Othello, more than martial merit, is made in Iago, as in Cassio, the cause of preferment.

Othello recommends a nun's life to Desdemona. Was Shakspere thinking of Ophelia and Isabella? Othello is made superstitious, and Emilia wickedly to stand by and be silent when she remarks the jealousy of Othello on account of the handkerchief. Cassio meets with Bianca, to whom he says:—

> I do attend here on the general,
> And think it no addition, nor my wish,
> To have him see me woman'd—

as well as wined. Nevertheless, he does seem to be 'womaned,' accompanies her part of the way against his first intention, leaves his business in hand, and promises her a speedy visit.

The situation in which Iago hypothetically supposes Desdemona, seems to be taken from the stories of some early Christians, who thought it a virtue thus to expose themselves to temptation. It can only be introduced here for the sake of condemning the religious, or ridiculing them. Falling into a delirium of rage at Iago's uncleanly apprehensions, Othello says, 'nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion, without some instruction,' on which Johnson says, it is the idea of some sympathy between the cause and effect which extends through the universe. Iago gives no very creditable account of Bianca and her attachment to Cassio. Cassio speaks in an affected way of her love to him, when Iago mentions it, and relates the story of her importunity in public as if he thought it was a feather in his cap; laughs at her, and says he must leave her; when she enters and tells a different story, for she is in a rage and he follows to pacify her, while he tells Iago he shall go sup there; though she had only threatened, if he did not come he might wait till he was again asked. Did not Shakspere wish to paint a weak man?

Where Othello says:—

> Oh devil, devil!
> If that the earth would teem with woman's tears,
> Each drop she falls could prove a crocodile;

Johnson remarks—'By the doctrine of equivocal generation, new animals were supposed producible by new combinations.' It seems, Shakspere was acquainted with this philosophy, so as to be able to use it as a poetical image.

The fact is that the materialism of the 'Vestiges of Creation' was advanced and canvassed by the philosophers of that age.

Othello says, as if calling Emilia who had the care of the door during his interview with his wife :—

> You, mistress,
> That have the office opposite to St. Peter,
> And keep the gate of hell.

Apart from any irreverence of a sacred subject, we shall see in the next play an ample dissertation upon hell, in which this very idea of a door keeper is again introduced, showing how Shakspere's ideas ran together for a time in one course.

Emilia says, what Shakspere means as applicable to her husband, that she is sure some villain hath slandered Desdemona, 'to get some office.'

> *Iago.* Fy, there is no such man; it is impossible.

That is what the critics say, but Shakspere's intention was to show that such a man might be made by circumstances. Emilia has a great deal of verbiage of religion used as imprecation—at times speaking lightly of it, at others arraigning Providence as not dispensing justice to the world :—

> Oh Heaven, that such companions thou'dst unfold,
> And put in every honest hand a whip,
> To lash the rascal naked through the world
> Ev'n from the east to the west!

Emilia says, it was the same sort of person that made him jealous of her with the Moor. Desdemona says, speaking of the character which Othello has given of her :—

> To do the act that might th' addition earn,
> Not the world's mass of vanity could make me.

We shall see this subject returned to and a long comment upon it. Iago says of Cassio :—

> He sups to night with a harlotry, and thither will I go to him: he knows not yet of his honourable fortune.

The sudden mention of Lodovico by Desdemona to Emilia, in the midst of her distress, and the companion's praises of him, seem the forerunner of her observations on adultery :—

Des. O, these men, these men!
Dost thou in conscience think,—tell me, Emilia,
That there be women do abuse their husbands,
In such gross kind?

Emil. There be some such, no question.

Des. Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?

Emil. Why, would not you?

Des. No, by this heavenly light.

Emil. I might do it as well in the dark.

Des. Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?

Emil. The world's a huge thing: 'tis a great price for a small vice.

Des. In troth, I think thou wouldst not.

Emil. In troth I think I should, and undo it when I had done. Marry I would not do such a thing for a joint ring; nor for measures of lawn; nor for gowns, petticoats, nor caps, nor any petty exhibition; but for all the whole world,—Why who would not make her husband a cuckold, to make him a monarch? I should venture purgatory for it.

Des. Beshrew me if I should do such a wrong for the whole world.

Emil. Why the wrong is but a wrong in the world; and having the world for your labour, 'tis a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right.

Des. I do not think there is any such woman.

Emil. Yes, a dozen, and as many to the vantage, as would store the world they play'd for.

Emilia then goes on to say that it is the fault of the husbands—they are false to their wives, and their wives then are false to them—that the women are so from revenge, or from having exactly the same senses and the same rights as their partners. Such a speech might emanate from a Mary Wollstonecraft, and seems given as advice to Desdemona after recommending Lodovico, and producing in the circumstances of Desdemona the case of justification in the adultery. We cannot suppose much chastity in Emilia after this dialogue. But the reader will observe from the 'some such' of Emilia, the conversation about the whole world is an entire digression, which might be well left out, as after it the real subject is continued, when Desdemona answers 'I do not think there is any such woman.' What then was the inducement of Shakspere to introduce such a digression, and to debate such a singular question on such an

occasion? It has been thought that he borrows the idea from the Saviour, who had talked of peoples gaining the whole world and losing their own souls. An incident is related of him, that the whole world was offered to him, if he would, in sacred language, commit adultery with or worship the devil. Shakspere argues that if he had the whole world, he could undo the vice, make the wrong the right—that if he had complete possession of the world he could do with it what he liked. He throws aside all consideration of a future state, another world, and the soul being lost. It might further be inferred, philosophically from such language, that virtue and vice, right and wrong, were not positive things, but were just as the world made them. The constant idea of the whole world, as a set off to the sin, and the mention of becoming a monarch, (which was promised to Jesus) and of venturing purgatory for it, seems very clearly to show what Shakspere was thinking of, and what he in his usual manner particularly reflected upon. The argument drawn by Emilia in the case considered, that the whole world would be the purchaser's, and that he or she might do what they liked with it, must be meant to apply to the original, and be condemnatory of the Saviour of mankind that he did not take the world, and do with it as he wished. It would be silly trifling indeed if Shakspere meant nothing more than what appears on the surface. It would be nonsense, and deemed impious nonsense by a Warburton, or as the interpolation of the players, if the Bishop had applied the knowledge of the divine to the interpretation of his poet. Johnson might think 'it too much in the manner of our author, trying to purchase merriment at too dear a rate,' but he would be too much 'afraid' to see through all the allusions of Shakspere. We have observed in Measure for Measure that something of the above was slightly introduced.

Iago sums up the circumstances why Roderigo and Cassio must both die. This occurs in the fifth act, which he never contemplated in the first. Iago says to Bianca, when Cassio is wounded, these are the fruits of illicit intercourse—and when Emilia calls her by her proper name, Bianca says she is as honest as Emilia is.

Othello is made to return to the idea of Emilia, and say in other words that if Desdemona had been true, he would not have exchanged heaven for her:—

> Had she been true,
> If Heaven would make me such another world,
> Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,
> I'd not have sold her for it.

Emilia confesses that she thought, from the very first, there was villany intended in the handkerchief. Her acquiescence in it can only be accounted for by esteeming Desdemona's reputation as lightly as her own virtue.

Iago is all composure, and seems to die a martyr to revenge, unless his assault upon Emilia be interpreted as departing from that temperament. Iago says what he conceives of his 'villainous whore.' When he stabs her Othello enunciates the sentiment of Emilia as to the non-interference of any Providence in the ways of men.

> *Oth.* Are there no stones in heaven,
> But what serve for the thunder? Precious villain!

There is a mocking irony in this, which makes it equal to the most irreverential passages. Steevens steps in to explain it by a prosaic paraphrase. 'Shakspere may mean, does heaven reserve its thunder only to make a noise? has it no implements of mischief to punish as well as terrify?' Did not Steevens see the impiety, when he attempted a little to disarm it? It sounds to us very much the speech of a person acquainted with stage properties—'what serves for thunder' is a comparison that would strike the manager of the Globe, who would not hesitate to apply it to the ruler of the universe. Hamlet's ridicule of the Ghost seems to us in the same way to take the reader immediately to the boards, trap-doors, and undergrounds of the stage, and the jokes are dependent upon them for their appreciation by the audience. Othello's speech over the dead Desdemona, preparing himself for suicide, has a strange mixture of Shaksperian philosophy, religion, poetry, and superstition. First he appeals to fate—'who can control his fate?' he then reverts to the idea so constant with Shakspere's dying men, of the no more than this life:—

of the reverential mind, who would, if they could, never allow him to touch sacred things who seem to allow it is irreverential by their anxiety to suppress such allusions, but when forced to the conclusion that they are intended, produce it as a proof of reverence.

KING LEAR.

Love should receive its own return in love. The feelings of love, under a sense of injury and injustice done them, the real want of that sublime virtue, filial affection, which the ancients called piety, and treated as a substitute for religion, and the consequences ensuing—seem to give the moral of this play.

When Lear asks for expressions of love from Cordelia, to draw a yet more ample dowry than her sisters:—

Cor. Nothing, my Lord.
Lear. Nothing?
Cor. Nothing.
Lear. Nothing can come of nothing: speak again.

This axiom of materialism, here applied in the beginning of the play to the temporal affairs of life, as usual with Shakspere, will be speedily reproduced, and have its philosophical sense conveyed in dialogue between the old king and his fool. We shall meet with it again in the Winter's Tale.

Lear, in his abjuration of his daughter Cordelia, says:—

> By all the operations of the orbs,
> From whom we do exist and cease to be.

Here we are told that the operations of matter make us to be or not to be. The divine power or spirit in the universe, and the immortality of soul or spirit in the body, seem alike discountenanced in this oath. Johnson says, Lear is the example of a man making vows, binding himself by religion, and pleading the obligation of an oath in defence of his bad conduct. The king of France says, that Cordelia must have committed a most monstrous offence to have merited the anger of her father:—

> Which to believe of her,
> Must be a faith that reason without miracle
> Should never plant in me.

Here first we have a thing put as monstrous, incredible, contrary to human reason, and all precedent, and yet represented as capable of belief if a miracle vouch for it. Secondly, we have words so pointed and particular, that they must allude to religion and Christianity, to which they are always applied; they are not at all suited to the character and the times, and are brought in merely from the state of mind of the author of them. Lastly, they resemble very much the language of Hume towards religion. The concealed irony of ascribing it all to faith and miracle, and not to reason, is the very sentiment which Hume uses at the end of his essay on miracles. Edmund says:—

> Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law
> My services are bound. . .

We shall see how these opening words correspond with his animadversions on religion. He ends the soliloquy appropriately by ridiculing the gods, calling upon them jocosely to give him their divine aid and assistance in all his villainous designs. Gloster, the father, is represented as rather a weak old man, the dupe of his bastard Edmund, who makes him suspect his legitimate son Edgar. He gives way to superstitious fears as Casca does:—

> These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects: love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord: in palaces, treason: and the bond cracked between son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father: the king falls from the bias of nature; there's father against child.

The reader will observe that, as between Casca and Cicero, Shakspere places on one side religion, on the other nature and reason, which he calls the 'wisdom of nature.' That he makes the observation of Gloster applicable to a particular faith, and to a point of belief delivered by the founder of it, no one can avoid thinking, when Gloster commences his speech by those signs which Jesus said would foretell the

end of the world and his coming; when he uses not only the language in general, but the very words in particular of Jesus on those civil and social differences which would follow, as a consequence, these natural appearances. Further, that the allusion to the Scripture might not pass over unobserved, he makes Gloster say the consequences of these natural disturbances come under the prediction. No one can think of any other prediction than that of Jesus, and no one can doubt but Shakspere thought of and meant no other. We shall find that Shakspere, in bringing forward Christianity on the scene, generally goes to Jesus, and in this instance the worst effect seems intended to be produced, as he makes Edmund expose what the Saviour had said, and breaks forth into the strongest denunciation of the supposition that the intentions of heaven are in any way indicated to men on earth. Gloster has no sooner made his exit after what he had said, than Edmund indulges in the following:—

> This is the excellent foppery of the world!

A strange expression to make use of in referring to the words of divinity upon earth, and the belief of Christians. Edmund goes on to say:—

> That when we are sick in fortune (often the surfeit of our own behaviour), we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treacherers, by spherial predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on.

He says that according to these predictions he must have been born under the evil auspices of the heavens, and that will account for his character, on which he rejoins to himself as Hotspur does to Glendower:—

> Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament trinkled on my bastardising.

It will be observed, by way of doing disservice to religion, and making it suffer by comparison and association, Shakspere has shown the identity of the faith as it is in Jesus with the vulgarest astrology.

From sun and moon Shakspere goes to astrological influences, and a star's effect upon nativity. Jesus himself adduced the sun and moon, giving evidence of his second coming, and Christians have assigned much to a star in the birth of Christ. Edmund, after giving instances of the supposed evil effects of the planets upon men, speaks of men laying their dispositions to the charge of a star. It is a question, therefore, whether Shakspere in this methodical reference to a particular religion (from the end to the beginning, and from the beginning to the end, as he returns to that afresh), intended any worse allusions to the manner of the nativity and the birth of Christ, or whether this coincidence in the discourse of Edmund, this union with the preceding and subsequent dialogue, was done without premeditation, and was the effect of chance. Such a train of ideas, we think, may be often traced in Shakspere's writings, one brought the other into his mind, and the apparent divergence from what he set out with was occasioned by his fear of giving offence. The more modified and less direct form of attack would be by religion and astrology mixed up together; letting the particular thought be almost lost in the general, which course he could pursue without palpably committing himself with the orthodox. Perhaps he merely followed his own impulse, caring nothing whether any one recognised it, as he glanced from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, introducing this episode of Edmund's before he returned again to the still more apparent attack on revelation. What is observable in Shakspere is, that once possessed strongly with an idea, he returns to it again and again—he cannot give it up, though apparently there is no cause for repeating it, except his love for it, and for the sake of producing some effect. Not only does he this in characters or passages far apart, but as in this instance immediately, and as if to bring in the concurrence of others, and to condemn in every way, through every one, any idea displeasing to him. As his brother Edgar enters, Edmund thus concludes his soliloquy:—

My cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom of Bedlam. O, these eclipses do portend these divisions! fa, sol, la, mi.

It may be observed, from various expressions, that Shakspere thought the most common effects of religion were melancholy, madness, sighing, and psalm singing. He makes Edmund draw this picture of a man under its influence, before he puts in his mouth this prophecy of misfortunes to others, and not the words, but the long drawn tune of a psalm.

Edgar. How now, brother Edmund? What serious contemplation are you in?

Edm. I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses.

Edgar. Do you busy yourself with that?

Edm. I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed unhappily; as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, death, dissolution of antient amities, divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles, needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

A prediction he had read, where else but in the Gospels? 'He writes,' who else wrote of such effects succeeding as are enumerated but Jesus, for He wrote them through inspired pens.

Edgar. How long have you been a sectary astronomical?

Here the conversation suddenly changes, as if commenced only for ridicule, or to shew that religion was a bad cause of action in many men's minds; and to make it detestable by the most accomplished villany assuming its appearance. It is no friendship to religion, which makes the irreligious assume its characteristics, the pious to talk impiously or ridiculously; and takes away all veneration for the sanction of religion.

It is probable Shakspere thought this introduction of religion would please his audience as well as himself; when such people as Gloster and Edmund were going about believing, or pretending to believe, the approaching fulfilment of the prophecies, who in the civil wars did fulfil the evils said to be consequent upon supernatural appearances, and which they said and believed prognosticated the immediate coming of Christ's kingdom. We may easily perceive the ridicule which would follow Edmund's personating the Puritan, the applause which would follow his

condemnation of what he called foppery, and Edgar's astronomical sectarianism. There was Shakspere's purpose, there was his disapprobation expressed of the religious; and not only did he wish to instruct by words, but as has been partly said before, he did not leave his examples to operate by chance, when such characters must operate against religion; and even in the punishment of the credulity of Gloster of the hypocrisy of Edmund, he gave, as far as he was inclined to do, a distribution of good and evil.

It may be said of Edmund, as of others, that he was a bad man, and therefore Shakspere had no participation in his words—that he intended to show how immorality was caused by irreligion, or irreligion by immorality, but Edgar and Edmund despise the religious sentiments of their father. Edgar, as Poor Tom, the philosopher of Lear, seems associated with the insane monarch, that they might run down religion together; and the pious Gloster delivers himself to his son of some of the worst impiety in the play. It may be said that Lear was mad, Edgar feigning the character, Gloster distracted by his misfortunes; but Shakspere has put his finest thoughts into the mouths of madmen and fools, proving in a sense of his own that the 'lunatic and poet are of imagination all compact,' and more than once he has said the greater wisdom might be expected from his fools. He did not mean it, therefore, to be for a moment supposed that his madmen and clowns actually talked as lunatics, or in the language of folly. Such objections as the foregoing to the character of Shakspere would not do to the Cain of Byron, or Queen Mab of Shelley, because the infidelity of one was in character, and the other was a fairy. Edmund says his practices 'will ride easy on a credulous father,' or on the perfect character of Edgar, who is not fitted for this world:—

> A brother noble, whose nature is so far from doing harms, that he suspects none.

When Lear's fool conveys, in a song, a commentary on the king's folly with regard to his daughters, Lear says:—

> This is nothing, fool.
>
> *Fool.* Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?
>
> *Lear.* Why, no boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.

Before this axiom of atheism was simply enunciated, here the opinion is accompanied with some argument: no use can be made of nothing, the proofs of design in the creation could not be given without a something. Shakspere makes Lear agree with this argument of the Fool, and address to him the celebrated *Nihil ex nihilo fit*—nothing can be made out of nothing. It seems here intended as purely philosophical, because Lear did not understand the allusion of the clown to his own affairs. The Fool tells Kent to explain to Lear the meaning, that he has parted with his property to his daughter—'he will not believe a fool,' he did not comprehend him. It is curious that just below this there is a strong political allusion given to the Fool, which, when the subject of it was fiercely contested by the parties, was left out in the editions of that day, in order to avoid giving offence. This prudent reserve in political, publishers observed in religious matters, by printing the plays according to the tenderness of the times on points of doctrine. This fool says he speaks truth, as Shakspere makes most of them declare, and he says he should have—

> A schoolmaster to teach him to lie, and be whipped for speaking the truth.

This probably is spoken against the persecution of opinion, whether political or religious. On the ingratitude of Goneril, Albany, her husband, is introduced, a religious character, but it seems only to show that in consequence he would do nothing himself, when appealed to by Lear, although not approving of his wife's conduct. He declares himself guiltless, and calls on the gods that he adores to enlighten his total ignorance. Lear says, 'It may be so,' and appeals to nature to revenge him on his daughter;—nature, which he makes the creator and continuer of mankind, and which he calls upon to stop the functions of vitality in Goneril, in the same language as Timon calls upon it to stop mankind and all their productions.

When Edmund, in the second act, makes up a false story against Edgar to report to his father, he would endeavour to make an impression on the religious mind of Gloster, by representing Edgar as found by him using the acts of

superstition. On the other hand, he represents himself as using pious language to Edmund to stay him from his purpose. Kent, in his quarrel with the steward, says:—

> You cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee; a tailor made thee.
> *Corn.* Thou art a strange fellow: a tailor make a man?
> *Kent.* Ay, a tailor, sir: a stonecutter, or a painter, could not have made him so ill, though they had been but two hours at the trade.

The making a man Shakspere never ascribes to a God, but always to nature. Whoever or whatever made the steward, anybody, Shakspere says, could have made him better. This is no proper respect towards God's works made after his own image. Shakspere knew it—he acknowledges in Hamlet the profanity of these comparisons, which he uses several times, and introduces the tailor as the man-maker more than once. When Kent is put into the stocks for his honesty and virtue, he ascribes it all to fortune—he does not think it the work of Providence, nor does he appeal to Providence:—

> Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.
> A good man's fortune may grow out at heels.
> Give you good morrow.

His soliloquy before sleep, though rather unintelligible taken in a common sense, is comprehensible taken as a medium for Shakspere to express his impiety. Instead of those religious sentiments so commonly recurred to on the coming of night, and in the midst of misfortune, Kent shows a neglect of Providence. Did not our author err on purpose to form a character agreeable to his individual sentiments?

> *Kent.* Good king, that must approve the common saw,
> That out of heaven's benediction com'st
> To the warm sun!
> * * * *
> Nothing almost
> Sees miracles,
> But misery.
> * * * *
> Fortune, good night; smile once more; turn thy wheel.

The Fool says of himself, 'when a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again.' Lear, arguing as a physician, ascribing all to material causes, describes how the

body may affect the temper, and cause a temporary derangement in the behaviour of his son-in-law towards him. Then comes the curses of Lear on his daughter Goneril. Heaven is invoked to do evil without attaching anything providential to its interference: matter is meant, and all its several powers are mentioned. While this irreligion is put in the mouth of Lear, his unnatural daughter cries shame upon it, and by way of contrast she is made to call not only the Gods, but the benevolent deities, 'the blessed Gods,' to witness that her turn may come to be cursed. When Lear sees Goneril approaching, Shakspere makes the old king appeal to the Heavens, or the Gods, with the usual doubt of their interference. Calling in question also all those attributes of benevolence which believers in religion attribute to divinity. Here also he attaches to them an anthropomorphism which almost makes them ridiculous:—

> O Heav'ns,
> If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
> Allow obedience, if yourselves are old,
> Make it your cause: send down, and take my part.

Lear is made to think the Gods therefore should take his part. Immediately after, Lear is made to express the uselessness of appealing to divine powers, and that people are and must be left to themselves to become bad or good:—

> But I'll not chide thee;
> Let shame come when it will, I do not call it:
> I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
> Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove:
> Mend when thou canst; be better, at thy leisure.

When his two daughters tell him he has no need of one servant, he says:—

> Allow not nature more than nature needs,
> Man's life is cheap as beasts'.

An idea of the materialists, and often introduced by Shakspere. Lear is made to repeat his doubts of Providence, and to infer from his own misfortunes, that if existing its office is to do evil rather than good:—

> Thou art a lady;
> If only to go warm were gorgeous,

> Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
> Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But for true need!
> You Heav'ns, give me that patience which I need!
> You see me here, you Gods, a poor old man,
> As full of grief as age; wretched in both:
> If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
> Against their father, fool me not so much
> To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger.

There is in this comparison between nature and the Gods a vein of scepticism—neither the one nor the other give us anything for asking, or seem to interfere in the world's affairs. Lear is made to call the Gods to witness his condition; as if they did not see, or seeing, did not see or care—expressions often put in the mouths of Shakspere's characters. Lear had just asked of the heavens patience: he tells God not to fool him by making him forgive injuries, but to give him anger to seek revenge. We see here, as has been remarked elsewhere on other similar occasions, the intention of Shakspere to attack the morality of the Sermon on the Mount.

In Lear's misfortune there is no thought of Providence, and his only comforter is the Fool, who labours to outjest his heart's injuries. Kent says the two brothers-in-law, Albany and Cornwall, are trying to outdo each other with mutual cunning. It should be remembered that Albany is drawn as a religious character, the believer in and interpreter of a providential system in the management of the world. Kent says:—

> Fie on this storm! I will go seek the king.

Lear enters in company with the Fool, calls upon the deluge to repeat its destruction of the world, the lightning to singe his head, and the thunder to strike flat the thick rotundity of the globe:—

> Crack nature's mould, all germens spill at once
> That make ingrateful man.
>
> *Fool.* O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house, is better than the rain-waters out o' door.

Lear's idea is taken from Lucretius, and repeated by all the atheists, down to the author of the 'Natural History of Creation.' Shakspere is very fond of, and puts, almost word

for word, the same in the mouths of Macbeth, Florizel in the Winter's Tale, and partly in that of a Gentleman in Pericles. Only here in Lear, the idea points directly to the creation of man. Naturalists favour this sentiment, from the analogy of insect life, but Shakspere makes Lear at once jump to the conclusion as to the origin of man. The Fool's answer seems to say it is better to conform to the religious observances of mankind than be cast out of society. It is no good to be exposed to the rain, being a wise man.

Lear tells the elements to go on, he taxes not them with unkindness, he is their slave. But he reproaches them as he does the heavens:—

> Rumble thy belly full! spit fire! spout rain!
> Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters.
> I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness:
> I never gave you kingdoms, call'd you children;
> You owe me no subscription; then let fall
> Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand, your slave,
> A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man.
> But yet I call you servile ministers,
> That have with two pernicious daughters join'd
> Your high engender'd battles, 'gainst a head
> So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul.

All is very material, yet there is a reflection of satire from it upon a benevolent deity, and a superintending providence. Nor does Shakspere long confine himself to such hidden satire; nearly all Lear's speeches are variations from materialism to open attacks on spiritual and providential influence. He says, in what else than the language of irony?—

> Let the great gods,
> That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,
> Find out their enemies now.

The Fool, before he makes his exit, says he will speak a prophecy, which seems only introduced for the purpose of ridiculing prophecy in general. It ends with a ridiculous climax instead of the awful catastrophe belonging to the prediction which he imitates:—

> Then shall the realm of Albion
> Come to great confusion.

Then comes the time, who lives to see't,
That going shall be us'd with feet.
This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before his time;

i.e., people shall do as they did do; go on their feet, not be angels, or have the use of wings, he would insinuate. Then still to turn prophecy in jest, the Fool names the prophet to be as well as the prophecy. For what other purpose could such nonsense be inserted, except to make an audience laugh at religion, and prophecy in particular? This is spoken evidently as an address to the audience, and has nothing to do with the play, as Lear and Kent have made their exits from the stage, and the Fool says he will stay behind to deliver it. Lear tells the Fool and Kent to go into the hovel, and says:—

I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

We shall see the nature of the prayer Shakspere puts into his mouth. He asks how are the poor to defend themselves from seasons such as these? He then reproaches himself as a king, not having taken more care of his subjects, and says:—

Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just.

By his first inquiry he accuses the seasons, or providential dispensation; then, by saying he has taken too little care, he would insinuate that the disposer of the seasons ought to have had the poor more in mind; and that man, feeling the misery of his fellow creatures, is their only helper. Shakspere could have had no little effrontery to preface such a speech by making his character say, 'I'll pray.' How differently would Shakspere teach us to pray from him who did teach us to pray! The Fool says Edgar, as Poor Tom, is a spirit. Lear takes him to be a father discarded by his daughters:—

Could'st thou save nothing? wouldst thou give 'em all?

Fool. Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all shamed.

Lear. Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air
Hang fated o'er men's faults, light on thy daughters

And he calls it a judicious punishment which makes the madman afflict his flesh, because it is the parent of such unnatural flesh. Edgar, on the other hand, represents his condition as the punishment of his own profligacy. This would be a religious moral, if it were true, but Edgar is reduced to feign madness on account of his virtue and confiding charity towards others. Lear's reflections on the state of Edgar fall into the usual materialism of Shakspere on the condition of mortality :—

Lear. Thou wert better in thy grave, than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies.—Is man no more than this? Consider him well: Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume:—Ha! here's three of us are unsophisticated!—Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.

'No more' is the usual meaning—there is nothing but the present—no after state of man. He is fond of the idea, and describes, in the strongest language, that man is akin to the animals.

The language and reflections here bear a similarity to another consideration of man and nature in the New Testament, which probably suggested the parody to Shakspere.

Edgar says:—

Poor Tom that, in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cowdung for sallets.

Shakspere alluded to the story of Ezekiel, to be found in the vulgar translation of the Bible.

Gloster says to Lear:—

What, hath your grace no better company?

Edgar replies:—

The prince of darkness is a gentleman.

Gloster tells Lear to come into his house, where fire and food is ready. Lear says:—

First let me talk with this philosopher.

Meaning Edgar, who hence forward takes the character and serves the purpose of the Fool, who, after the third act, is no more seen or heard of.

What is the cause of thunder?
I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban:
What is your study?
Let me ask you one word in private.
O, cry you mercy, noble philosopher, your company.
I will keep still with my philosopher.
Come, good Athenian.

Here are two madmen set to ask of one another the cause of nature, the origin of its laws.

Lear, in company with Poor Tom and his fool, one of whom he calls justice and the other equity, would bring to trial his two daughters. This is done in mockery of a judgment hereafter, as, from what the three say, Shakspere is copying the scene from Charon, the Styx, and the three judges of the infernal regions. Shakspere could not do more; but one sees he arraigns the justice of Providence on earth, and makes out, as in Titus Andronicus, that such divine dispensation is to be found nowhere.

Lear fancies Regan appears before them, and then passes from his sight:—

Corruption in the place!
False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?

Insinuating that justice was no more to be found in heaven than elsewhere; that it was the dream of a madman. An after state of punishment is, as he makes Theseus say, the imagination of a lunatic.

Lear **Let them anatomise Regan, see what breeds about her heart; is there any cause in nature makes these hard hearts?**

Shakspere cannot see a soul, unless it is held up to view, dissected from the body; or he would throw doubt by his question on any cause but a material one influencing the hearts of mortals.

On Gloster's beard being plucked by Regan, he says:—

By the kind Gods, 'tis most ignobly done
To pluck me by the beard.

This is given to keep up the religious character of Gloster, and to bestow an epithet upon Providence, the reverse of what it was, if it had a hand in the coming tortures of the poor old man. Gloster, abusing Goneril and Regan for their cruelty

to their father, also seems to accuse the heavens of showing no feeling to Lear or to men, when inanimate nature would have revolted against such treatment.

> *Glos.* The sea, with such a storm as his bare head
> In hell-black night endured, would have buoy'd up
> And quench'd the stelled fires;
> Yet, poor old heart, he helped the heav'ns to rain

He says, in the words of Horace:—

> But I shall see
> The winged vengeance overtake such children.
> *Corn.* See't shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair.
> Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.
> *Glos.* He that will think to live till he be old,
> Give me some help. O cruel, O you Gods!

This, at any rate, is but poor mockery of mortals' belief that they shall see vengeance, however late, overtaking the wicked, even if Shakspere did not think the idea religiously true.

The religious Gloster is punished for his goodness in relieving Lear; his religion is made the instrument of his misfortunes, and of Edmund's villany. He calls upon the Gods for assistance, but a servant answers to the appeal, who in consequence meets with his death from the hands of his master, Cornwall. This is illustrating, by example, what Shakspere says, that mortals show more benevolence than deities—and are not protected from injury, but meet with punishment, in the exercise of virtue. We shall see, in Gloster's speech, Shakspere's explanation of these phenomena, coupled to the belief in divinity, the moral and the cruelties of the fable.

Edgar always talks philosophically of his misfortunes, always finds a remedy in himself, or external circumstances, and bears with patience his afflictions. He has hope in this life, a pleasure in existence, and the worst he laughs at. He says, on the heath, when he sees his father blind, led by an old man:—

> World, world, O world!
> But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,
> Life would not yield to age.

O Gods! who is't can say I'm at the worst?
I'm worse than e'er I was.

This is said from seeing the extremity to which his father is reduced by the loss of his eyes.

Edg. And worse I may be yet; the worst is not
So long as we can say, this is the worst.

This is bearing ills without thought of flying to others that we know not of. The worst is in life, and death is the boundary of woe, mental and physical. When Gloster is told it is poor mad Tom, madman and beggar, he says:—

He has some reason, else he could not beg.
I' th' last night's storm I such a fellow saw;
Which made me think a man a worm

He had come, as well as Lear, to this material conclusion; and speaks in the following most impious manner:—

As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' Gods;
They kill us for their sport.

Shakspere makes this believer in God and Providence liken the deities to sitters in a Roman amphitheatre of gladiatorial shows, too willing spectators of our agonies.

Edgar says, five fiends have been in him at once. And Gloster replies:—

Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens' plagues
Have humbled to all strokes. That I am wretched,
Makes thee the happier. Heavens deal so still!
Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,
That slaves your ordinance, that will not see
Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly:
So distribution should undo excess,
And each man have enough.

He addresses Edgar first as one of those flies he had been speaking of, who are made the sport of Providence. After this Gloster tells Edgar to lead him where he may commit suicide, and out of it he is to reap still further advantages. Shakspere often pursues this unpleasant idea, that every happiness is the product of misery; gain on one side, loss on the other. This, at any rate, must make people totally indifferent to all misery, if they are to see in it only the accomplishment of necessary ends; and they can have no

feeling of religion when they believe that miseries constitute the sport of him who made us.

In the following passages religion is subjected to doubt; the moral conclusion is Shaksperian; and, after the usual manner of the author, Christian patience under wrong is treated with abuse.

Albany. If that the heav'ns do not their visible spirits
Send quickly down to tame the vile offences,
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep.

Gon. Milk-liver'd man!
That bear'st a cheek for blows.

We have numerous dialogues in this part of the play, upon which it is not necessary to descant in particular, as they in common abound with material and irreverential reasoning.

The religious Gloster proceeds to the cliff to throw himself down. He gives Edgar, as Poor Tom, a jewel, and in comical contrast says:—

Fairies and Gods, prosper it with thee!

Another instance amongst many of the indifference Shakspere showed to religion, by treating all creeds as the same, and using their theology indiscriminately. Gloster says:—

O you mighty Gods!
This world I do renounce; and in your sights
Shake patiently my great affliction off:
If I could bear it longer, and not fall
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
My snuff and loathed part of nature should
Burn itself out.

In this dying speech of Gloster, Shakspere's usual vein is visible—there is the firm expectation that death is a shaking off of all ills. When his death is prevented, called a miracle by Edgar, it only produces a speech in favour of suicide after the manner of Cassius, and a sort of reproach on the powers preventing it.

Glo. Alack, I have no eyes.
Is wretchedness depriv'd that benefit,
To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort,
When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage,
And frustrate his proud will.

Edgar says his former self, Poor Tom, was the devil. He gives a description how he appeared to him in his new character of a peasant, which speaks for itself as Shakspere's ridicule of the belief in that personage. But when he goes on to persuade his father that this was a miracle, and this pretended miracle one amongst and a proof of all other miracles, this is impious :—

> Therefore, thou happy father,
> Think that the clearest Gods, who make them honours
> Of men's impossibilities, have preserv'd thee.

Was not Shakspere thinking of the yea and nay commanded by Jesus, when he makes Lear say:—

> To say ay, and no, to everything that I said—Ay and no too was no good divinity.

As if the reflection were that though people might obey in speech the divine commands, it made them no better, it was no religion.

Lear, in his madness, absolves from death a man supposed to have committed adultery. Where was he condemned to die, but in the Old Testament? He next takes the case of an adulteress, whom he characterises as not worse than the executioner of her punishment—had he not the judgment of Jesus in mind? He ends with a most bitter invective against mankind—the design of their birth.

> *Lear.* When we are born, we cry that we are come
> To this great stage of fools.

Cordelia prays that 'the kind Gods' will restore her father's senses. The epithet and the result are alike incompatible with the past and the future of Lear and Cordelia, and seem to proceed from the irony of Shakspere, who has declared the principle of a Providence, if interfering, is malevolent. She herself has greater charity than was ever heard of in the heavens above or the earth beneath. The night of the storm her father was cast forth, she would have extended hospitality to her enemy's dog, if it had bitten her.

Edgar commends Albany to 'fortune.' In his remonstrance to his father, again thinking of committing suicide,

and rotting where he lies, he makes much the same material conclusions as to death that Hamlet uttered.

> *Edg.* What, in ill thoughts again? men must endure
> Their going hence, ev'n as their coming hither.
> Ripeness is all. Come on.
>
> *Glos.* And that's true too.

Edgar, from natural causes, as he says, was fond of life. Our coming and our going hence he speaks of as from and to the same state—we cannot avoid and must endure it—the fulness of time and circumstances must make an end. 'Ripeness is all' is expressed by Hamlet's 'readiness is all,' though the former is more full of material meaning, likening man to fruit which must fall.

Cordelia says, herself and father being led in as prisoners:—

> We're not the first
> Who with best meaning have incurr'd the worst.
> For thee, oppressed king, am I cast down;
> Myself could else out-frown false fortune's frown.

Here is Shakspere's moral, and the truth of nature, only exaggerated by the poet, who certainly had it in his own power, not to draw such unnecessary calamity on the good, and in doing which one cannot but imagine that his design was to reflect on Providence, who, according to Albany, and partly according to Gloster, orders all things. Cordelia ascribes her lost condition to fortune, which, if meaning divinity, is called false—giving hopes, but not fulfilling them.

Lear says to Cordelia, they will go to prison, and pray and sing to each other; and he speaks in mockery of the religion, as well as the politics of the day:—

> And take upon's the mystery of things,
> As if we were God's spies. And we'll wear out,
> In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,
> That ebb and flow by th' moon.

These packs and sects, religions true and false, ebb and flow, act and react, as the tides and all other sublunary things. Lear says, in reference to the fate of himself and faithful daughter:—

> Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
> The Gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?
> He that parts us, shall bring a brand from heav'n,
> And fire us hence like foxes.

A horrid idea of mythology—that the Gods were pleased with human sacrifice, and would themselves assist it with a sign of their approbation. Here was a fearful religious illustration of the preceding sentiment of Gloster, that we are sport to the Gods, and as Cordelia says, victims to the frowns of false fortune. That Shakspere's mind went from general religion to Scripture, and so onwards, seems corroborated from the idea of the next lines seeming to have their foundation in the Bible.

Shakspere, as usual, makes all the characters of his play die materially, and those who are left living neither think of those gone to judgment or to heaven.

There is no dread of after death, which expressly recognises that the sins of this life shall not be forgotten, but be brought fresh to the recollection of the sinner hereafter—the good and the evil are alike to be buried in eternal sleep. Edmund, having received a mortal wound, confronting the prospect of death, acknowledges to all that Edgar had accused him of, and much more.

> *Edm.* What you have charg'd me with, that I have done,
> And more, much more; the time will bring it out.
> 'Tis past, and so am I. But what art thou,
> That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,
> I do forgive thee.

No thought of a future; all was past, and so was he; no wrong could come to him, and Shakspere gives him a touch of human love, a sort of heroical philanthropy in the forgiveness of injuries, which it seems was all the natural morality of Shakspere. It is curious that the infidel dramatists and novelists of France claim as something original and moral, the giving to their greatest villains redeeming qualities. It also shows that much of the motives of Edmund's crimes arose from the circumstances under which he was placed. He thought himself degraded by his bastardy, and wished to be on an equality with his associates. Johnson is offended at Edgar's answer, and says—'Our author, by negligence, gives

his heathens the sentiments and practices of Christianity.' Which does most wrong to the author, ascribing to him negligence, or intention? As we before said, this was the natural morality of Shakspere.

Edg. Let's exchange charity.
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;
If more, the more thou'st wrong'd me.
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
The Gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us;
The dark and vicious place where thee he got,
Cost him his eyes.
Edm. Thou'st spoken right, 'tis true.
The wheel is come full circle; I am here.

We have not the justice of Providence invoked and claimed by Edgar, but the justice of material laws. Edmund gives the interpretation to it. He attributes his success, decline, and fall, to the wheel of fortune, which makes its round of good and evil, expressing poetically and materially the same idea as Edgar. When called upon to recount his adventures, he pleads his love of life, which prevented the counselling of suicide, in words or thoughts elsewhere used by Shakspere, as an inducement to part with it:—

O our lives' sweetness!
That we the pain of death would hourly bear,
Rather than die at once.

The dialogues immediately following these are severally in keeping with the whole of the picture before the reader. We come to a remarkable passage at the end of the play. When Albany hears of the order Edmund has given for the death of Lear and Cordelia, he utters the pious ejaculation, 'the Gods defend her;' which Lear answers, entering with Cordelia dead in his arms, and saying:—

Howl, howl, howl, howl!—O, you are men of stone;
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever.
I know when one is dead, and when one lives;
She's dead as earth!

This seems a reflection on the want of feeling, even religious apathy, of Albany, who might have prevented the catastrophe,

and who is even tame on such an occasion in calling upon heaven. It is also a reproach, so frequent in Shakspere, of heaven for its indifference to man when called upon. He is fully aware of her mortality—she's dead as earth: nothing can paint death stronger or more enduring. Lear says, what was true of Albany:—

> A plague upon you, murd'rous traitors all!
> I might have sav'd her; now she's gone for ever!

When Kent asks if Lear recollects him, as his servant Caius, he says, 'He's dead and rotten:'—

> And my poor fool is hang'd. No, no, no life.
> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
> And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never——
> Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, Sir.
> Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
> Look there, look there——

He dies at the end of this speech. He arraigns the indifference of Providence to individual life—which alike kills or preserves the precious and the worthless without speciality. He has no idea that the good, too good for this, may be taken to a better world—nor expects, on dying, to see his Cordelia again. He takes leave of her in the most reiterated and emphatic strain of human language. Edgar, with his characteristic love of life, tries to revive Lear. Kent exclaims:—

> Vex not his ghost. O let him pass. He hates him
> That would upon the rack of this rough world
> Stretch him out longer.

The religious liberties Shakspere has taken throughout this play, he palliates and defends in the last speech in it. Albany speaks the valedictory words, and retrospectively alludes to the sentiments of the principal characters thus:—

> The weight of this sad time we must obey,
> Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
> The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
> Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

As we have remarked before, Shakspere shows sympathy with extraordinary villany—such as is exhibited in the cha-



racter of Edmund—we are therefore inclined to suppose he did with his irreligious sentiments. The only religious character, Albany, yielding to the sisters, excusing his compliance—he makes contemptible. The impiety of Gloster made Mrs. Griffith, who wrote on the morality of Shakspere, and coupled with it religion, wonder how Shakspere could have expressed such sentiments. One such instance exhibits the tendency of a man's mind. But it is not singular in Shakspere.

MACBETH.

In Othello, Shakspere pronounced the judgment of reason against witchcraft having any agency in the actions of men. In Macbeth he takes a period and a country where belief in such supernatural workings might be admitted. But the whole of the play goes to discredit them; the witches are not made to do anything more than reason might teach; they might begin with an actual truth of which they had information; they might trust for success in the rest of the materials they had to work upon; and that, in them, the hope itself would work out its own fulfilment. As to their prophecies, they are those which always find out completion; they fit badly; but events will meet words, and the ingenuity of man is at exercise to fulfil what is spoken of the future.

Having profited by the barbarism of the age to introduce what is supernatural, Shakspere has made Macbeth a modern philosopher. The witches merely represent motives and causes; Macbeth would exercise free-will, but he is made to bend to a superior fate. But we are sure that, amidst supernaturalism and necessity, Shakspere wished to show that, not only in the physical world nature guided our actions, but in the moral world there was a system of morality which favoured the right and punished the wrong. This was the moral of the play; a natural moral, which he has carried on throughout in contradistinction to any religious. He shows supernaturalism working for evil; religion not preventing evil; but morality predisposing to good, counteracting evil, almost succeeding in establishing right; and if disordered in its general rules, readjusting itself, proving itself a true prophet and providence from the beginning to the end. We meet with all this in the first act, for we believe Shakspere wishes always at the commencement to lay down the principles of his plays, and let them be the guides to the termination.

Macbeth is first spoken of by the soldier as 'disdaining fortune.' What a material address Banquo utters to the weird sisters! He is not a believer in witches; he has a philosophy of his own, that all things are in matter or time; there is no directing them; at best anything supernatural can only see into them. The passage seems drawn from Lucretius, given to keep people in mind of nature amidst these seeming departures from it. Can we suppose that Shakspere puts forward such philosophy, on such an occasion, not at all suiting it or the character of a kilted savage—and was not himself speaking?

> If you can look into the seeds of time,
> And say which grain will grow and which will not,
> Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
> Your favours nor your hate.

The very words are those which Lucretius employs in delivery of his atheism. Macbeth calls the speech of the witches, prophetic greetings. But Banquo speaks in a very different and sceptical spirit of all supernaturalism—the real remains, the ideal is but a bubble.

> *Ban.* The earth hath bubbles, as the water has;
> And these are of them. Whither are they vanish'd?

He will not believe, though he was an eye and ear witness, and makes it a question whether those who believe in things contrary to experience are not deprived of their reason.

> *Ban.* Were such things here as we do speak about?
> Or have we eaten of the insane root,
> That takes the reason prisoner?

He gives way, however, to the idea of the devil on the first fulfilment of their prophecies, but gives the philosophy of them in saying they begin by success in trifles, and that gives them credit for and makes people work out greater results for them, and that Macbeth's trust in one fulfilment will probably enkindle him to achieving the rest, from the earldom to the crown. Macbeth thinks it cannot be ill because it is true, but it cannot be good because it is against the use of nature. What a satire upon some religions, and what a good for mankind, if, instead of trusting to what

appears a supernatural truth, and may indirectly be one, they allowed themselves only to be swayed by facts, and did not think that ever could be good which was against nature. The very thought of evil has made Macbeth from a happy a miserable man—he has lost all his peace of mind. He becomes, who did not care for fortune, a suppliant slave to chance.

Macb. If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,
Without my stir.
Come what come may,
Time and the hour run through the roughest day.

Malcolm's account of the execution of Cawdor gives an opportunity to Shakspere to introduce those sentiments regarding death, and give an example of them, which we have so often noticed in his writings:—

Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving of it. He died
As one that had been studied in his death,
To throw away the dearest thing he ow'd,
As 'twere a careless trifle.

There is no mention of the religious importance of the passage from one life to another; nothing, in leaving, of the consideration of what is coming; he is praised who has studied to think life a careless trifle. This is not Christian, but it is the sentiment of one who has studied in a heathen school, and we see it when we find the Roman plays immediately succeeding Macbeth. The soliloquy of Macbeth, on hearing his king appoint his son successor to the throne, resembles, in some points, Iago's meditations, bringing to light his hidden wickedness.

Lady Macbeth, on her entrance on the stage, at once gives the excellent nature of her husband, which has begun, and is to be perverted by surrounding circumstances. Superstition leads the way in the letter she reads from Macbeth, giving an account of his interview with the witches. She thinks little of the witches, much more of the material circumstances favourable and unfavourable to her ambition. No thanks to the supernatural ministers, no invocation to them for the future:—

> Yet do I fear thy nature;
> It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness,
> To catch the nearest way.

Here is a tribute paid by Shakspere to the love, which is born, and must be in the hearts of all mankind—a physical necessity nursed by original circumstances and very little adulterated by predisposing causes before birth, it is weakened, but scarcely ever quite destroyed, by the circumstances of after-life:—

> Thou would'st be great,
> Art not without ambition; but without
> The illness should attend it. What thou would'st highly,
> That would'st thou holily; would'st not play false.

What a tribute not only to the man, for scarcely any one is so much a man as Macbeth, in this boldly drawn picture; but what a tribute to natural morality, how materially worded; there is an illness in evil; that which constitutes evil is 'nature's mischief,' nature's sickness, which cannot be digested in the system, must be vomited forth from the general body to give it restoration, and if not purged from the individual, it proves the poison that kills. Whatever there is of unseen cause and effect, supernatural and improbable, Shakspere, in Lady Macbeth, gives us the philosophy of it. She says:—

> I'll chastise with the valour of my tongue
> All that impedes thee from the golden round
> Which fate, and metaphysical aid, doth seem
> To have thee crown'd withal.

Her resolution taken, on notice given that the king and her husband are coming to pass the night in the castle, she can scarcely believe so speedy an accomplishment to the witches and her own promises. In her joy she welcomes all that forebodes death, from the croaking raven to unseen thoughts and their purposes. Nothing is to come between them—no remorse, no pity. The spirits that attend on mortal thoughts are, in her sense, only for evil, and are to fill her from the crown to the toe top-full of direst cruelty. What nature had given her, and what she had ascribed to Macbeth, the milk of human kindness, she tells them to take away from her:—

Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
Wherever, in your sightless substances,
You wait on nature's mischief!

These invocations betray an irony of belief in the supernatural, and can only be construed materially.

Macb. If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly; if th' assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With its surcease, success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all—Here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But, in these cases,
We still have judgment here, that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th' inventor; this even-handed justice
Commends th' ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips.

The moral of things is laid down by Shakspere in this soliloquy of Macbeth, as axiomatic to all the problems of the play. It is nothing more than the natural law of morality and justice; but it might have been spoken without pointing offensively at religion. In making the law of nature all-sufficient, it was not necessary to introduce religion as inefficient. Why should Shakspere do it, unless he thought so? The only mention of true religion, and not superstition, he gives to the character of Macbeth, is to make it worthless. Why, in a beautiful exposition of the workings of natural justice to warn mankind from crime, and produce its punishment, should he represent religion as no preventive, and its punishments to be laughed at? Here was the puissant arm of the politician declared impotent, who does not reason about the truth of religion, but the effect it has upon the people. The generality of Christians declare there is no morality without religion. Shakspere would have morality everything, religion nothing; shows the one is the law of nature, proved in the general body, whilst the other has no effect, and remains unproved. In Macbeth, he would prove the natural law of justice, not religion, to be the only preventive of crime, as in conclusion we shall see he makes virtue for a time gain the ascendency, when it

would have remained triumphant had it not been overpowered by external circumstances. Shakspere believed that life was the be-all and end-all, and death was sleep, and no more. Convinced that he had nothing to do with a future state of rewards and punishments, except to show that morality could do without it; that it naturally resulted as far as this life went, he went the way to work all unbelievers do; and, as is his constant practice, he damaged, indirectly, as far as he could, the belief in a future state and all its consequences. Some Christian philosophers, and divines of the church, have advocated a general rule of morality in the law of nature, but they have made an exception for the superior sanction of religion; while Shakspere only excepts to detract from the merits of revelation. As revealed is depreciated by natural religion; as the great Spirit of the universe is negatived by denying immortality of spirit to the man; as Providence is eschewed by a system of nature; so Shakspere evidenced his approaches to atheism, if it cannot be positively affirmed of him that he was an atheist. But what more could be asserted of Lucretius, in his poem on the nature of things? The thin partition divides them, that Shakspere spoke in dialogue, Lucretius did not; that the Roman could freely deliver opinions as his own, whilst the Englishman could not. The generality of mankind are certainly religious, at least they are not sceptical philosophers; to be one betrays an individualisation not belonging to the parties speaking, but to the person writing. If the generality of mankind are religious, and if they are not so internally, they must be externally—for religion is the nation, religion is the law, and irreligion is a crime. It follows that to be religious, or appear religious, is a generalisation of character to which Shakspere has not adhered; but has allowed his own idiosyncrasy to introduce sceptical philosophy, or ridicule of religion, as a generalisation of character, which was against the rule, and human nature as then constituted. There are many now who lay the foundation of religion in sentiment or feeling, and discard all other evidences. According to them, Shakspere could have no feeling for religion; the poet of nature, the most abandoned to its impressions, has nowhere written

an eulogy on religion. As a poet, he has seized upon the supernatural—as the poet of nature, he has taken the terrors of religion, whilst he has ridiculed them, but religion in general he has condemned, whilst he has not conformed to religion in character. It was not, then, the character who only spoke, but Shakspere, when he made Macbeth speak. What an opportunity Shakspere had of introducing a religious truth suitable to character—when the occasion seems to remind the author to step out of the way to disappoint the Christian. We say it is natural to expect that, when he comes to the 'if it were only here,' he was going to speak of a future state where crimes never go unpunished. But as if that must naturally occur to the reader, Macbeth is made to say he does not care for that at all. How pointed is the comparison between the oft-repeated 'here,' the judgment 'here,' the even-handed justice 'here,' and these attributes of the life to come. There is no mention, no thought of a Providence here—of the justices of heaven to set things right on earth; the causes and the consequences of crime are left to adjust the balance—the scales of justice in favour of virtue—of right over wrong. All this is general; there is no particular dramatic instance, as in Hamlet, and Midsummer Night's Dream, which requires the supposing the instrumentality of chance in the unphilosophical, or of a divinity in the religious. In fine, the doctrine of responsibility of man to man is inculcated, the responsibility of man to God entirely discountenanced. We may say, not only of Macbeth, but of all Shakspere's tragedies, this speech is the moral.

How exactly the words of the moralist and metaphysician, Sir James Mackintosh, correspond to the speech of Macbeth, and the morality of Shakspere:—'The facts which lead to the formation of moral rules are as accessible, and must be as obvious, to the simplest barbarians, as to the most enlightened philosopher. It requires no telescope to discover that undistinguishing and perpetual slaughter will terminate in the destruction of his race. The motive that leads him to consider them, is the most powerful that can be imagined. It is the care of preserving his own existence.' But this had been already said by Shakspere in Lear, and elsewhere.

Greene said it to Marlowe of religion, Shakspere without religion would show it to be in the nature of things.

Macbeth goes on to say that the virtues of Duncan will make the world punish his murderer—that pity, the love which men have for each other and for goodness, will make them execute justice on Macbeth. Not religion, but this morality, makes Macbeth more in love with it than the passion of ambition, to which he is given up — not the common fear of anything here, or hereafter, but of the moral hideousness of guilt, the loveliness of virtue, and the true courage of innocence.

Macb. We will proceed no further in this business.
He hath honoured me of late; and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.

Lady Macbeth calls him a coward, so to be diverted from his purpose by these considerations of virtue.

Shakspere drew Hamlet 'infirm of purpose'—drawn aside from his intentions by the perchance of a future state. Shakspere gives, in Macbeth, the contrast of a man of courage and strong resolutions, who cares not at all for the life to come, but does for the right, and the consequences of crime. Still more striking is the contrast of Macbeth with Claudio, who would wrong himself and others rather than face the actualities of death, and the possibilities of an hereafter. Hamlet proclaims himself and every one a coward, who with this their current turned awry, and made their enterprises lose the name of action. But Hamlet's intentions of harm to himself were not those of crime towards anybody else; and while Shakspere makes Hamlet sum up, unanswered, the cowardice of those who fear a future state, and leaves Claudio to the merited abuse of his sister in fearing death, he deals differently with Macbeth; when, not the hereafter, but the judgment here of himself, and others, has pronounced against his intention, and made him swerve from his resolves.

When Lady Macbeth asks him if he would live a coward in his own esteem, he says:—

Pr'ythee, peace.
I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more, is none.

Johnson, the moralist, says of this—'she urges the excellence and dignity of courage, a glittering idea, which has dazzled mankind from age to age, and animated sometimes the housebreaker, and sometimes the conqueror; but this sophism Macbeth has for ever destroyed, by distinguishing true from false fortitude, in a line and a half, of which it may be said, that they ought to bestow immortality on the author, though all his other productions had been lost.' The reverential admirers of Shakspere, we suppose, will not here detract from his merit, and say the line and a half must be ascribed to the character, and not to Shakspere. If Shakspere's moral sentiments may be inferred from those of his characters, so may those with regard to religion. General principles of morality, if delivered, must be assigned to the writers. We cannot suppose, if we think him of sane mind, that he participates in the sophisms of all the murderers and rogues he brings upon the stage. In the same way, Shakspere's sentiments with regard to religion may be inferred from those general principles which, in didactic discourses, he has so often laid down; not to speak of the odious colours which he has often given to religion, the ridicule which he has heaped upon it, the terms he has used towards it and its professors, which cannot be said was his practice towards virtue and morality. This line and a half, if it does not convey a reflection on the Hamlets, certainly does on the Claudios of society. After Macbeth had been laying down the laws of morality, its obligations, rewards, and punishments apart from religion, he destroyed, by one saying, the arguments in favour of wrong against right by Lady Macbeth. Johnson proceeds to show what Shakspere might have done in favour of religion. Lady Macbeth uses a religious argument to persuade Macbeth to the murder of Duncan—she urges the obligations of his oaths. Says Johnson, 'this argument Shakspere has not confuted, though he might easily have shown that a former obligation could not be vacated by a latter—that obligations laid upon us by a higher power, could not be overruled by obligations which we lay upon ourselves.' We have often produced evidence that Shakspere did not hold oaths in any esteem—was it not his intention to discredit them here? Oaths, and sophisms of all sorts, he

gives to murderers and villains—words that, to the commonest capacity, convey no reason in them, but are suitable to character, to the wrong side of every question. Did not Shakspere, therefore, produce them in Lady Macbeth for the purpose of contrasting the persuasions of vice and religion with the claims of virtue? They were consistent with the character of the Lady, and her purposes; but to have answered religion by religion would have been inconsistent with the character of Macbeth and of Shakspere, who was endeavouring to show the obligations of virtue, in contradistinction to those of an hereafter, or a higher power.

Lady Macbeth says:—

> When in swinish sleep
> Their drenched natures lie, as in a death.

This is a beginning of a variety of passages in this play comparing death to sleep, and sleep to death.

When the bell sounds, which summons Macbeth to the murder, he says, in rhyme, not reason:—

> Hear it not Duncan, for it is a knell
> That summons thee to heaven, or to hell.

Macbeth has many of these passages given to him, in the style of Richard III., which neither speak belief nor disbelief; if any thing, more the latter, and which, in the way of belief, are spoken of another in mixed feelings of pity and contempt of religion. Lady Macbeth says, 'had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done it.' This woman, who said she would not object to destroy her own children, is affected the other way by her own relation of daughter to a father. Thus Shakspere, true to his principles, would show that in all there is an inherent love of humanity, a milk of human kindness not easily withdrawn from its sources. Macbeth, when he says he shall have no more sleep, calls it 'the death of each day's life.'

> *Lady Macb.* The sleeping and the dead
> Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood
> That fears a painted devil.

The knocking gives Shakspere the occasion of ridiculing a future state and hell, after he has argued against judg-

ment and a life to come. The porter of Macbeth's castle, aroused from his sleep, imagines himself holding the office opposite to St. Peter, the keys of hell—where he thinks there must be enough to do unlocking the gates, when there are so many wicked in this world, and so many are promised damnation in the other. At each knock he asks who is there in the name of Beelzebub and the other devil's name, and answering himself, is witty at the expense of each supposed new comer he fancies consigned to the place under his care. 'Here is a farmer,' he says, 'who hanged himself on the expectation of plenty,' recommends him to provide himself with plenty of napkins, for he'll have to sweat for it. Next comes an equivocator, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven. 'O come in, equivocators.' The commentators say Shakspere here means the Jesuits; but we think it may stand for hypocrites in general, Puritans as well as Roman Catholics—'all great doers for the Lord's sake.' We think it intended by Shakspere, perhaps under cover of an obnoxious sect, for an additional stroke at religion in general, particularly after the speech of Lady Macbeth to induce her husband to commit murder for the Lord's sake, for in that sense must be considered all obligations contracted with a higher power. A tailor, for stealing, he tells to come in and roast his goose, heat his irons. But being too sensible from the cold of the early morning, that it is not hell he is the keeper of, the Porter says—'this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil porter it no farther.' The reader will recollect that the Clown, in All's Well that Ends Well, said 'he was a woodland fellow, that liked a good fire, and would, therefore, be pleased with a situation under the devil.' A recommendation of hell, which, believed in hypothetically, was no doubt one with Shakspere as well as his clown and porter. Porter concludes very differently from what he had begun. 'I had thought to have let in some of all professions, that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.' This is not only making a joke of the affair, but in particular of the expressions of Scripture, which represent the way as pleasant and easy to everlasting torments and hell flames, which Shakspere calls a bonfire, a good fire, a joyful

blaze. A sneer is also thrown out at the idea that so many do go to hell, as he finds but very few customers instead of the many he had been taught to expect. This too, is one of those digressions of Shakspere which cannot be accounted for, except from his habit of afterwards ridiculing what he had just previously been considering seriously, and to make people laugh at what he thought it was not possible to believe. The inference was, that not many, if any, go to hell—people need not be uneasy on that score. The reader will recollect that in Ophelia we noticed a previous impression of the sentiment which concludes the soliloquy of the Porter. As if to verify the observation of the 'Quarterly Review' on the junction of irreligion and indecency, some of the coarse obscenity of Shakspere immediately succeeds in the mouth of the Porter.

Lennox speaks of the night—

> Confus'd events,
> New hatch'd to the woeful time;

in the strain of speakers of prodigies in Hamlet and Julius Cæsar.

Macduff, on seeing the murdered Duncan, returns and cries:—

> Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! awake!
> Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
> And look on death itself——Up, up, and see
> The great doom's image.——

What does this mean, but that the last day is the death of each individual? Rosse and Old Man continue the reflections of Lennox on the night of the murder. After recounting the natural prodigies, on the sons of Duncan being charged with the murder of their father, Rosse says, 'against nature still,' not as if prodigies were caused by heaven, and men's monstrous acts were rebellions against it, but as if they were only infringements of nature.

The king's sons fly, as they say, to avoid fate—that might seize them as well as their father. Macbeth having yielded to it, in the commission of crime, would next commit another in defiance of it. Has he, he first says, destroyed his life here, his peace of mind, to make Banquo's sons kings?—and

he adds to the measure, to provoke him to the fresh deed, the idea of the life to come—for which he said he did not fear to commit a crime.

Macb. For them the gracious Duncan have I murther'd;
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
Only for them; and mine eternal jewel
Giv'n to the common enemy of man,
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings.
Rather than so, come fate into the list,
And champion me to the utterance!—Who's there?

Combat a l'outrance, as the commentators say.

Macbeth would employ men to murder Banquo, who thought themselves injured by him; he would yet proceed holily in his work of destruction. Such is the character of Macbeth. But Shakspere need not have put into his mouth a sneer at the charity of Christianity, in persuading the murderers. Macbeth asks if they have been 'so gospelled to pray' for those who ill use them? The sneer is exhibited in their answer:—

1*st. Mur.* We are men, my liege;

i. e., true manhood is inconsistent with the forgiveness of injuries.

Macbeth says to the murderers that all men are alike, speaking of mankind generally, but nature makes a distinction between individuals, by the gifts found in one man more than another. One murderer is a sort of Iago, so incensed with the treatment he has received from the world, that he will do anything to spite it—and the other, under the same circumstances, would do anything to mend his life, or be rid of it. We have here the motives of bad action: had proper circumstances acted upon them they had been good men—returning good for good, instead of evil for evil. How much the world is made up of the first, still more perhaps are they of the second sort. Macbeth concludes with Banquo, as he did with Duncan:—

Banquo, thy soul's flight,
If it find heav'n, must find it out to-night.

Here is a doubt and a sneer.

Macbeth, having championed fate to the utterance, says

to Lady Macbeth, he would tilt with the universe, the things made and their maker, to sleep in peace:—

> But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
> Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
> In the affliction of these terrible dreams
> That shake us nightly.

He who had said he would not endanger his soul for Banquo, and talked of sending his victims to heaven or hell, or nowhere, now comes to the Friar Duke's conclusion as to the sleep of death, as if Shakspere, drawn on by the ideas of dreams in sleep, sought to overthrow the antagonistic conclusion—Hamlet's chances of death, not releasing us from the ills of life, but bringing us from bad to worse. Macbeth says:—

> Better be with the dead,
> Whom we, to gain our place, have sent to peace,
> Than on the torture of the mind to lie
> In restless ecstacy.—Duncan is in his grave;
> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
> Treason has done his worst; nor steel nor poison,
> Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
> Can touch him further!

Another catalogue of the ills of life to be added to Hamlet's, and the Duke of Vienna's, which will not affect him hereafter, where nothing can touch him further. Again is the speech of Macbeth put opposite, as it were, to the conclusions of Claudio. Not only in thoughts, but in words, Claudio imagined the restless ecstacy of an hereafter. Macbeth expressed a sense and experience of the restless ecstacy here, which hereafter he had said he did not care for—but in this place he says positively and repeatedly, contrary to Hamlet and Claudio, that death is 'a paradise,' where nothing can touch him further. This absolute impossibility of anything affecting man after death is often expressed—almost in the same words by Shakspere—sometimes by men on the death of others, and as a recommendation to die: sometimes on their own deaths—by one is it given as his epitaph; on another occasion a woman is made to say it as well as a man, and a woman bent on self-destruction—which we shall meet with in plays immediately succeeding.

Lady Macbeth says of Banquo and Fleance:—

> But in them nature's copy's not eterne.

The copy of a type which, probably, Shakspere did not think eternal, but might be broken to be replaced. Macbeth speaks materially of Banquo dead, and Fleance living:—

> Thanks for that.
> There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled
> Hath nature that in time will venom breed,
> No teeth for th' present.

On the appearance of the ghost of Banquo, Macbeth speaks material sentiments against the apparition:—

> If charnel-houses and our graves must send
> Those that we bury, back, our monuments
> Shall be the maws of kites.
> The times have been,
> That when the brains were out, the man would die,
> And there an end; but now they rise again,
> With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
> And push us from our stools. This is more strange
> Than such a murther is.

More strange than true, as Shakspere said in Theseus.

After the departure of the apparition, Macbeth gives way to the feelings of superstition, in the same manner as the characters did in Hamlet on the same occasion, and as the world does by reporting, not the fact they know themselves, but the *on dits*, the sayings and accounts of other people.

> *Mach.* It will have blood,—They say blood will have blood.
> Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak;
> Augurs, and understood relations, have
> By magot-pies, and by choughs and rooks, brought forth
> The secret'st man of blood.

In the celebrated soliloquy on natural justice, Macbeth delivered the rationale of apprehension and judgment directly contrary to these sentiments so largely entertained by the vulgar. Which does the reader believe were Shakspere's opinions, those he first puts in the mouth of Macbeth, which were founded on nature and reason, or those which he terms the 'they says' of supernaturalism? We read his opinion, and the moral of this, as a sequel to the other, to be that such and such are the vulgar notions with regard to existence after death—the dead taking any part in the concerns

of the living, the inanimate interfering with the animate, the non-human with the human—whilst our convictions have been declared, and argument has been given to opinion in favour of natural against providential and religious justice.

Hecate, the mistress of the witches, says Macbeth does not love but despises them, spurns fate and scorns death. Macbeth does not address them as hags very respectfully, and of the answer to his question, a parenthetical sneer is put in, 'however you come to know it;' and, as if to give birth to the future before its time, might produce universal destruction in delivery, he says, in spite of it, 'tell me,' referring all to nature in a Lucretian style similar to Banquo's address to the witches:—

> Though the treasure
> Of nature's germins tumble all together,
> Even till destruction sicken, answer me
> To what I ask you.

When they tell him that he shall never be vanquished till a wood comes against him, speaking from himself, and not the 'they says' of others, he says at once, that it is impossible that anything supernatural can be; that if others might say the 'trees spoke,' he defied them to move. But the language is applied to a person, and is such as could only be used to a deity, which, questioning such attributes as impossible, seems intended as a reflection on a power which all religious persons believe can and has so exercised its sovereignty over nature, for which higher power Macbeth makes no exception; it does not come within the range of his belief that God might so assist man which he has done in the Bible.

> *Macb.* That will never be,
> Who can impress the forest, bid the tree
> Unfix its earth-bound root?

Not the maker of it, nor providential justice in favour of the right over wrong.

> Our high-placed Macbeth
> Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath
> To time and mortal custom.

High-placed Macbeth, worded as it is against a higher power.

Shakspere again makes Lady Macduff draw a fine picture

of natural love. The child has no natural piety, but when told of the death of its father, and asked what it will do, says as the birds do, get what it can. Now the birds are expressly mentioned in the Scriptures as creatures supported by Providence, so common that Shakspere has put it in the mouth of old Adam reverentially, in Pistol's blasphemously. Lady Macduff says the boy is witty, by which we are to understand from Shakspere, that he is meant to be so. When she says the liars and swearers are to be hanged by the honest men—he says, the liars and swearers must be fools, for they are in so much greater number they could hang the honest men. Is this to ridicule the way of teaching children virtue, telling them what is not true as to the effects of vice, and of the quantity of untruth which Shakspere must have supposed was current in the world, when he delivered opinions so contrary to religious truth, and which got one more honest than the rest executed for their open profession?

> *Lady Macd.* Whither should I fly?
> I've done no harm. But I remember now
> I'm in this earthly world, where to do harm
> Is often laudable; to do good, sometime
> Accounted dangerous folly.

Macduff says, 'New sorrows strike heaven on the face.' Malcolm says of himself to Macduff, it is—

> Wisdom
> To offer up a weak, poor innocent lamb,
> To appease an angry God.

Whence did Shakspere take this illustration, and was it not intended to recoil on revealed religion—the innocence of the lamb offered as a sacrifice to appease the justice of God? Malcolm goes on in a religious strain, which bespeaks the current of Shakspere's ideas:—

> Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell;
> Though all things foul would bear the brows of grace,
> Yet grace must look still so.

Is it intended by this that religion is religion still—a matter of faith in the best, though appearances to man are different? Or is it intended particularly as a sarcasm upon the Puritans, who said of themselves, grace was grace

still, however sins might offend and declare the contrary in the elect? Malcolm, in the simulated account of himself, says:—

> Nay, had I power, I should
> Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,
> Uproar the universal peace, confound
> All unity on earth.

This is the natural state often laid down by Shakspere, and no man is allowed to exercise the power of mischief beyond his little circle, and nature repairs the breach as soon as made. When Malcolm gives his real character, it is such as Shakspere's 'I would not betray devil to his fellow.' Rosse says of the murdered family of Macduff:—

> No; they were well at peace when I did leave 'em.

Malcolm says:—

> Be comforted.
> Let's make us med'cines of our great revenge,
> To cure this deadly grief.

Macduff, as he had spoken in general of heaven, so he does consistently with his own particular grief:—

> Did Heav'n look on,
> And would not take their part?

This sentiment was twice repeated in Hamlet, was in the preceding play of Othello, is to be found elsewhere, is most fully developed in Titus Andronicus, and there is evidence to prove it was considered blasphemous even by the writers themselves of such passages. Whether it was Shakspere thought some religious apology necessary; but he makes Macduff in his own case repeat the sentiment of Malcolm about the lamb; that the innocent, in the ways of Providence, have to die for the guilty. Shakspere teaches in this, as in other instances, that revenge, not justice, is all that mortals expect from heaven and the Deity; that He is busy in doing ill, not preventing it or doing good, and that is all that can be asked of Him by his followers. When Macduff, therefore, accuses heaven of seeing and not interfering in the destruction of his family, he is made to say that God has done it for his sins, and Malcolm tells him to bear it like a man,

seek revenge, and be the instrument of the powers above. Macduff then only asks of heaven the opportunity of satisfying it. It may be said, that Shakspere shows his belief in divinity, its attributes, and religion, by introducing these subjects; but, apart from the necessity of keeping within general character, all blasphemers take religion for granted in order to abuse it, by following it to what they consider its consequences; and, in the effects of its doctrines, they would disprove it; they would say it could not be so; that there was no Providence. That there is no Providence, is the inference to be drawn from all such passages, which upbraid a higher power for its non-interference—which says, in fact, it is not exercised. Any admission of it afterwards is only to detract from its co-operation. Other writers in their works have, and Voltaire in his plays has, attacked religion under the same guise. It is this system of the infidels which has made Lord Brougham, in acknowledging the intentions of Voltaire, use the curious argument that he is not a blasphemer—that no man can be who abuses that which he does not believe in; the believer only, according to him, can be a blasphemer. This would make Shakspere a blasphemer if he did believe, and every religious sect, according to the interpretations of each other on the untruth of their respective doctrines with regard to belief. Shakspere makes Macduff end with one of his sneers in the Richard III. style. He says of Macbeth, 'if he 'scape, heaven forgive him too;' taking vengeance into his own hands, and railing at Providence for its non-interference; which, having shown here no judgment yet, might not hereafter. He impertinently prescribes to it, that it may forgive Macbeth in the world to come, if he does not execute justice on him here below.

Lady Macbeth, in her sleep-walking, refers to the impossibility of life after death :—'I tell you yet again Banquo's buried; he cannot come out of his grave.'

Angus says for him, and Macbeth himself, that he has lost the love of others, which, natural to man, must seek, in the fulfilment of his nature, morality, and the social duties, its return. Having gained the object of his ambition, and lost this love, he confesses himself sick, and, as it were, dead. Is not this moral enough? When he asks the Doctor—

Canst not thou minister to a mind diseased?

the Doctor, who had said she more wanted a divine than a physician, answers him :—

> Therein the patient
> Must minister to himself.
> *Macb.* Throw physic to the dogs, I'll none of it.

One would think, therefore, that these expressions were intended to apply more to spiritual and moral, than physical remedies. When he is told the queen is dead, he says she should have died, when she might have seen her life of ambition arrive at a better fulfilment. He then proceeds to the following general reflections upon life and death:—

> To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
> Who struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more! it is a tale,
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing!

Amid seeming revolutions, past and anticipated catastrophes, eras, pagan and Christian, in human events, futurity creeps on in this petty pace from day to day, to the last syllable of recorded time; instead of gods arising from the decay of mortals, all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. The light of revelation, faith and hope, according to Shakspere, have shown us fools the way to dusty death. This life, that Christians humbly imagine gives evidence of the attributes of eternity, signifies nothing, is a tale told by an idiot; and by whom is the tale said to be told but by its maker? Mortals possessed with the thought of immortality, briefly end in being no more, nothing. How often have we been told by Shakspere that we are fools, death's fools, and here we have it repeated with one of the material epithets usually assigned to the end of man—dusty. Earth has its bubbles, and without thinking of ghosts, we are but walking shadows—we cease to be reflected as those reflections of matter cease to be. We have again Jaques's 'all

the world's a stage, and all the men are players,' with parts as brief as at the Blackfriars, or in the Globe on Bankside. There we had the last scene of his sad eventful history, sans everything; but here of his hopes we have the stern echo of Shakspere's materialism, which, like an owl amidst ruins, cries no more.

There are three lines of Catullus, which have always been supposed to express his disbelief in a future state, if not his atheism. In this speech of Macbeth we have a similarity of idea in the opening line, an exact translation of two words in the second, and the last contains, word for word, the constant expressions, elsewhere, of Shakspere on death: —

Soles occidere et redire possunt,
Nobis, cum semel occidit brevis lux,
Nox est perpetuo una dormienda.

The lights of heaven go out and return.
When once our brief candle goes out,
One night is to be perpetually slept.

The conclusion of Macbeth's speech is similar to a line in the Troad of Seneca:—

Post mortem nihil est, ipsaque mors nihil.

After death nothing is, and death itself is nothing.

Campbell might have written of Shakspere those celebrated lines on atheism, where he speaks of the brief candle as 'momentary fire,' which 'lights to the grave his chance-erected form.' When Shakspere attacks superstition, as in the case of Voltaire, it is difficult to say that it is not directed against all religion. Macbeth has delivered a speech on the mockery of existence, the cessation of all hope, and the willingness to part with as much as to keep life. But now the promises of superstition begin to fail him:—

—I pull in resolution, and begin
To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend.
I'gin to be a-weary of the sun,
And wish the estate o'the world were now undone.—

But though willing that all and himself should end, and thinking that nothing in his own or the life of others, or in the state of this world, was worth retaining, yet hatred, the



passion he had exchanged for love, he will satisfy in killing till he is killed, and he will have his fate fulfilled without making himself the instrument of it. We might imagine Shakspere had been reading the ancients, and that the Roman plays were the next to come, when he says :—

> Why should I play the Roman fool, and die
> On mine own sword? whiles I see lives, the gashes
> Do better upon them.

The resolute Macbeth, on the question of to be or not to be, thus makes a proper answer to the infirmity of purpose. Hamlet, when he had such business on hand, should have attended to it in executing justice on others, as Macbeth seeks to die in having it executed on himself. Macduff invokes Fortune with the same levity he did heaven to give him a meeting with Macbeth :—

> Let me find him, Fortune!
> And more I beg not.

For a moment the failure of all superstitious confidence 'cows' Macbeth :—

> And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd,
> That palter with us in a double sense;
> That keep the word of promise to our ear,
> And break it to our hope.

The miraculous, under which he suffered, is thus exposed in his end. Dying, Macbeth is made to curse the instruments and machinery of religion as well as witchcraft. It seems, after the speech of Macbeth on life, its expectations and disappointments, that these latter passages applied to the Christian idea of a charmed life under a never ending futurity of existence, as if it were never to be commenced, never to be realised, any more than in those promises which had deceived Macbeth—in persuading him he was to live the lease of nature, when he had acted so contrary to its laws. Depicting Richard II. looking for support to Scripture, and brought to his ruin, Shakspere made him, in his end, draw the same conclusion with regard to the Saviour's words, the Bible, the book of truth and salvation, that Macbeth delivered with regard to the evil counsel and promises of the witches.

Rhyming and swearing is the last utterance of Macbeth taking leave for another world. He speaks of himself as he did of others, and as Richard III. did to his soldiers on Bosworth field.

The commentators say that Macbeth, being written in honour of James I., the witch-killer, Shakspere did not ridicule the idea of witchcraft so much as he would have otherwise done, and so much as had been done in a former play—whence he borrowed his diabolical machinery. We think, in Othello, he had already given argument to opinion against the idea of witchcraft, and against the evidence employed to correct people of such a crime. There was the action laid, the accuser's pleadings, the accuser's defence, the judge's charge and acquittal. In making witches actual on the stage, he could not more have ridiculed their reality, if he did not aim at undermining religion, and particularly prophecy.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

JULIUS CÆSAR, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus, are three studies of Roman antiquity.

It may, therefore, be said, that the whole cast of these plays is necessarily anti-christian, that Shakspere represented his characters as he found them, with their appropriate sentiments. Suicide, and even regicide, had to wear the air of noblest virtue, in the code of iron morality Shakspere had to shadow forth. 'The noblest Roman of them all' is, of course, ignorant of Christian ethics; but the glimmerings of his religious faith yield to the force of circumstances, and the perversions of Shakspere. Thus realised, and thus metamorphosed, Shakspere gives Brutus as an example to all mankind.

> His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up,
> And say to all the world, 'This was a man!'

The same compliment he pays to Antony, confessedly the hero in the play of the same name.

Coriolanus is represented more as a god than a man. These are three tragedies; in the midst of them a comedy, Roman, antique, and melo-dramatic, in every sense—Cymbeline, which seems incorporated with more of modern ideas, and intended as a burlesque and censure of some ancient notions Shakspere met with in studying Roman history.

The philosophy of materialism may be more in the lives than the mouths of the characters of Julius Cæsar, yet Shakspere's bias is seen, when the natural and the supernatural, the religion of those days and reason, questions of sense, philosophy and imagination, make this play their debatable ground, and point the moral of the tale.

Cæsar incredulously says of the Soothsayer, who forewarns him of the Ides of March:—

He is a dreamer; let us leave him. Pass.

Cassius, the Epicurean, says to Brutus:—

I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life; but for my single self,
I had as lief not be, as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.

Cassius is drawn as a thorough materialist, and in his allusions to the equality of man, his common origin, and the aggregate greatness of the universe, he speaks the sentiments of a Spinoza. As Helena, in All's Well that Ends Well, and Iago to Roderigo, he says:—

Men, at some times, are masters of their fates:
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

Shakspere alone speaks with the following indifference of the enemy of mankind, (as Cassius was not acquainted with him):—

There was a Brutus once that would have brook'd
Th' eternal devil to keep his state in Rome,
As easily as a king.

In speaking of Casca, who is religious, our author talks of his 'sour fashion,' a fashion that Shakspere, probably from his knowledge of the Puritans, seems to have attributed to the pious of all creeds. Casca says, when Cæsar offered his throat to be cut, 'if he had been among the people, and had not done it, he would have gone to hell with the rogues.' This again is only Shakspere's sentiment; and the cool way in which he speaks of going, or sending others to eternal torments, makes him often incur blame. Casca, however, is one of those led by others—one of the many feeble among the few strong—one influenced by weak circumstances more than others.

Whilst the Romans are more or less agitated, by the height of power to which Cæsar had attained, and are suspecting the progress of his ambition, which a Cassius would of himself stop, a storm arises, and causes the characters of this play to deliver their opinions on heaven, and its interference with the things of earth. Casca relates to Cicero the horrors of the night, and says:—

When these prodigies
Do so conjointly meet, let not men say,
'These are their reasons'—'They are natural;'
For I believe they are portentous things
Unto the climate that they point upon.

Cicero, the philosopher, answers:—

Indeed it is a strange-disposed time:
But men may construe things after their fashion,
Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.

When Cicero goes out, and Cassius comes in, Casca re-delivers himself of his fears—charging Cassius with impiety towards the gods, for saying he does not care for, but braves the heavens. On which Cassius, seeing the effect which may be produced upon a mind more imbued with faith than reason, and ever ready to believe, says a storm ought to forewarn the world of the monster Cæsar would become, and thereupon he persuades Casca to make one of the conspirators. Thus Shakspere not only gives argument to opinion, but example, and would prove the truth of Cicero's observation, that the interpretation of men 'wrests the nature of things clean from their purposes.'

It may be said of this instance that Shakspere would only denounce the extremes of superstition; but when he so frequently introduces the same reflections, discrediting all the circumstances which originate what is called natural religion, and manifest God and Providence—we cannot well resist the evidence, that if he did not wish to show too much his intention, his inclination made him not only attack natural but revealed religion.

Cassius speaks in favour of suicide; and it must be admitted that Shakspere speaks as often against it as he does for it; but he gives the reasons of the world against it, and supports it by very fine and curious arguments. It must be remembered that Shakspere was a reader of Plutarch, who claimed the right of man to dispose of himself, irrespective of the property held in him by a superior being; who thought suicide useful, and became certain occasions, and blamed those who did not show a readiness to rid themselves of their misfortunes.

When Cassius proposes to the conspirators to swear,

Brutus appeals to material motives as sufficient for human resolves and virtuous enterprises. It is only religion, he would insinuate, and the morality which would suffer wrongs, that require oaths :—

> Swear priests, and cowards, and men cautelous,
> Old feeble carrions, and such suffering souls
> That welcome wrongs; unto bad causes swear
> Such creatures as men doubt; but do not stain
> The even virtue of our enterprise,
> Nor th' insuppressive metal of our spirits,
> To think that or our cause or our performance
> Did need an oath.

It is curious, at least, that a few lines afterwards, Shakspere speaks in terms, which, if not incidental to that time, were prophetical of the future. In speaking of the moderation to be shown in the very act of killing Cæsar, he says :—

> This shall make
> Our purpose necessary, and not envious;
> Which, so appearing to the common eyes,
> We shall be called purgers, not murderers.

Now we know this was a designation used by the Puritans and commonwealth men to cover any action. Cassius says, it is doubtful—

> Whether Cæsar will come forth to-day, or no:
> For he is superstitious grown of late,
> Quite from the main opinion he held once
> Of fantasy, of dreams, and ceremonies.

Decius says Cæsar loves to hear laughed at the influence they have over men, and is proud of the idea that he is not swayed by such considerations. Cæsar certainly does appear a little shaken, or rather it may be said that he was politician enough to endeavour to counteract popular superstition by superstition. Speaking to a woman, and answering religion partly by religion, he puts the gods by name only in the place of necessity—which he fully admits. He says :—

> What can be avoided,
> Whose end is purpos'd by the mighty gods?

At the same time as others had said of the 'aimless nature' of these occurrences, so even a Cæsar does not think they

more belong to him than anybody else—however great he is, and humble the rest of the world. He says, as Hotspur to Glendower:—

> Yet Cæsar shall go forth: for these predictions
> Are to the world in general as to Cæsar.

Cæsar had no fear of the present, no fear of a future—it was unaccountable to him that men should fear death. He thinks with Hamlet, that it is 'the fear of an hereafter which makes cowards of us all.'

> *Cæsar.* Cowards die many times before their deaths,
> The valiant never taste of death but once.
> Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
> It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
> Seeing that death, a necessary end,
> Will come when it will come.

Suetonius says Cæsar was never deterred from any undertaking by religion.

According to Sallust, Cæsar said before the senate, 'Beyond (life) there was neither place for care nor joy.'

Brutus, conversing with Cassius on the death of Cæsar, does not appeal to the mighty gods, but to the fates as holding the decision of men's lives. Both terms equally representing necessity in the language of philosophy and Shakspere.

> *Bru.* Fates! we will know your pleasures:
> That we shall die, we know; 'tis but the time,
> And drawing days out, that men stand upon.
> *Cas.* Why, he that cuts off twenty years of life,
> Cuts off so many years of fearing death.
> *Bru.* Grant that, and then is death a benefit;
> So are we Cæsar's friends, that have abridg'd
> His time of fearing death.

Juvenal said the fates govern men, and the fates explained to be necessity, in contradistinction to any Providence as the cause of human affairs, is declared to be their belief by the historians Paterculus, Quintus Curtius, and Tacitus.

It appears to us that Shakspere should not have put fate into the mouth of Brutus, as agreeing with Cassius and Cæsar, who were of a different philosophy from those who believed in Providence and a future state. In accordance

with his real sentiments he makes Brutus talk of 'Providence,' and of 'higher powers governing us here below.'

When Brutus hears of the death of his wife he so much loved, he does not speak of meeting her in a future state, either now or at his own approaching death. He says to the person who brings him the intelligence:—

> Why, farewell, Portia. We must die, Messala:
> With meditating that she must die once,
> I have the patience to endure it now.
> *Mes.* Even so great men great losses should endure.
> *Cas.* I have as much of this in art as you,
> But yet my nature could not bear it so.

The last act rather transposes characters and determinations. We see the Epicurean philosopher, Cassius, giving way to superstitious presentiments, and, in consequence, killing himself when he might have lived to retrieve his fortunes. We see Brutus arguing against suicide, condemning it in others as irreligious, and taking his own life as an unavoidable necessity. Cassius says:—

> You know that I held Epicurus strong,
> And his opinion; now I change my mind;
> And partly credit things that do presage.
> *Mess.* Believe not so.
> *Cas.* I but believe it partly.

He prepares to die with an idea of life quite in material style:—

> This day I breathed first; time is come round;
> And where I did begin there shall I end;
> My life is run his compass.

On his suicide, Messala gives a commentary quite in the spirit of Shakspere's observations in general on religion:—

> Mistrust of good success hath done this deed.
> Oh hateful Error, Melancholy's child!
> Why dost thou shew to the apt thoughts of men
> The things that are not? O Error, soon conceiv'd,
> Thou never com'st unto a happy birth,
> But kill'st the mother that engender'd thee.

Where he may safely do it, Shakspere calls religion error, though he makes no exception for the true in his animad-

versions on the false. The celebrated sceptic, Hume, placed all his infidelity to the account of errors in creeds, and in the faith of Christians; but to have the reputation of orthodoxy among his readers, he went farther than Shakspere, and always mentioned the true religion, and the truths of religion, as untouched by his arguments. Religion is error here, as the worship of the Indians is called religious error by Helena. It is the child of melancholy, as we have observed. Religious sentiment is ascribed by Shakspere to a defect in the constitution and temperament of mankind.

The melancholy, or 'sour' Casca, had, as Cicero said, wrested things clean from the purpose of the things themselves. We remarked the effect on Casca, and the use made of them by Cassius, who said he disbelieved in them. We have now the example of Cassius giving way to the same influences, and the unfortunate consequences produced; and, in the sentiment of Messala, the saying of Cicero is redelivered after proof of its truth—'error shows to the apt thoughts of men the things that are not.' This imagination, which served for all, and did not point to any one thing, certainly had been created only of unhappy results, and ruined its conceivers.

Before parting for the battle field, Brutus and Cassius take leave of each other. Cassius makes up his mind to kill himself. He asks Brutus what he has determined to do, in case the battle goes against them. Brutus speaks against suicide as Cassius had formerly argued in favour of it. He says:—

> Even by the rule of that philosophy,
> By which I did blame Cato for the death
> Which he did give himself; (I know not how,
> But I do find it cowardly and vile,
> For fear of what might fall, so to prevent
> The time of life); arming myself with patience,
> To stay the providence of some high powers
> That govern us below.

This reasoning is taken entirely in sense, and partly word for word, from the speech given to Brutus on the same occasion by Plutarch. The biographer, as we have said, did not agree with Brutus, but thought that it was cowardice in a man not to give up life and seek death at his own convenience.

It is curious that Shakspere, in the speech of to be or not to be, which he gives to Hamlet, and where he may be supposed to speak his own sentiments, contradicts, in words as well as ideas, the thought of the Roman that it was cowardly to kill oneself. Hamlet does not doubt there is any one who would not rid himself of his misfortunes if death was the end. According to Shakspere, our religion has made us cowards from the hope of a future state, as the idea of a god would have deprived Brutus of the power of disposing of himself. Shakspere makes Brutus give way to the taunts of the unbelieving Cassius, while Plutarch more naturally makes Brutus state at once that he was of a contrary mind to his former opinion on suicide, which made him condemn the act in another, but which he found untenable when placed himself in the same situation. Cassius did not speak of the possibility of meeting anywhere hereafter, if they were not to meet alive after the battle. That was consistent with his faith as it was in Epicurus, but not with the stoical philosophy, the religion, or even character of Brutus, as given by Shakspere himself, when he makes him say to Cassius:—

> No, Cassius, no; think not, thou noble Roman,
> That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome;
> He bears too great a mind. But this same day
> Must end that work the Ides of March begun.

Here he assents to the doctrine of Cassius, Hamlet, and Shakspere, that a great mind will not put up with misfortunes—and casting off the idea of a disposer of events, he does not speak of submitting to Providence:—

> For whether we shall meet again I know not.
> Therefore our everlasting farewell take.
> For ever and for ever farewell, Cassius!
> If we do meet again, why, we shall smile;
> If not, why, then this parting was well made.
> *Cas.* For ever and for ever farewell, Brutus!
> If we do meet again, we'll smile indeed;
> If not, 'tis true this parting was well made.
> *Bru.* Why then, lead on. O that a man might know
> The end of this day's business ere it come!
> But it sufficeth that the day will end,
> And then the end is known. Come, ho. Away.

Now nearly the whole of this speech is Shakspere's, as nearly



as the whole of the preceding one was Plutarch's. Shakspere omits, in the first speech, the acknowledgment of a future state —which is to be found in the Brutus of Plutarch—and makes Brutus and Cassius join in chorus to its complete disavowal. Brutus, in Plutarch, when he has determined to put an end to himself, says, 'I gave up my life for my country in the Ides of March, for the which I shall live in another more glorious world. Cassius fell a laughing to hear what he said.' Now what can be more determined than the faith of Brutus in a future state, as uttered in Plutarch; and what more marked than the total disregard of it in the Brutus of Shakspere? Yet up to that point Shakspere followed, more or less, authority—when he flatly contradicted it; and why, except to serve his own purpose? Nothing is more clear than the sentiments of Shakspere with regard to a future state; and here he offends against character, and against truth, in order to suppress an opinion contrary to his own—and puts in the mouth of Brutus language so common to himself, in denying future existence and making the extinction of identity 'everlasting.' We find these 'everlasting farewells,' and 'rests,' often repeated; and the reiterated 'for ever and for ever' is assuming sacred language, with regard to eternity and future life, in order to deny it. We suspect that Shakspere broke the speech of Brutus, and introduced Cassius, representing the calamities of life, in order to make Brutus assent to it, as sufficient reason for 'its being nobler' to part with life than suffer their endurance. We have no doubt that Shakspere was directed by his own sentiments to the conclusion to which he brought Brutus, though contrary to the fact; and this tendency, so apparent in the one, makes it more probable what it was on the other point of controversy—involving, not only an allowance to commit suicide, but a setting aside the consideration of the superintending Providence—on which the argument against it was founded.

Brutus says he wishes he could know the end of this day's business; implying that their ghosts, presages, and augurs could not tell them anything certain, but only mislead them. The sentiment of Brutus is the same as Henry IV.'s about seeing into futurity, only the Christian king is made to say people would commit suicide rather than go on with life, foreseeing

its calamities. Brutus says 'I know my hour is come' when he prepares for self-destruction—not exactly the words that should be taken from the Saviour of mankind on the awful advent of his own sufferings for the world, to be put in the mouth of Brutus on such an occasion. Strato describes his death:—

For Brutus only overcame himself.

A courageous conqueror! and no coward — as he once thought to have done such a deed. Knight has given a 'supplementary notice to the Roman plays,' where, speaking of scene 3, act iv., between Brutus and Cassius, he quotes Coleridge—'I know of no part of Shakspere that more impresses on me the belief of his genius being superhuman than this scene between Brutus and Cassius.' This language has been called idolatry—some critic, we believe, says 'blasphemous.' Mr. Knight, with whom, therefore, Coleridge is an especial favourite, exceeded his original. Coleridge, with his transcendental German views, might think genius an emanation of divinity, and, therefore, superhuman. It was no more than the hero worship of Carlyle. But servile idolatry we should say was Mr. Knight's language, who requires a blind worship of Shakspere, and who would bring his poet down from the reverence, which all men have for that which is superior to them and above their capacities, to the low idolatry which requires the object to be worshipped in conformity to received notions of religion. None join a higher admiration of Shakspere for what he is than we do, but we would prefer reason to faith in the estimation of humanity—we would not have a false religion or worship of Shakspere. We think that what is bad in religion must have the effect upon its followers of accommodating them to its errors. We do not propose a work of excision, but that people may see the relative truth of things. It would be absurd to represent Shakspere's obscenity as decency, but it is just as absurd to say that his irreligion is reverence of sacred things. It would be absurd as an apology to say that the obscenity was not Shakspere's, it belonged to the characters, as it is to allege that the irreligion is not the author's, but the characters'. Bowdler has done

for the offences of Shakspere against decency what the Rev. Charles Knight, as 'Fraser' facetiously calls him, might with truth and honesty have done for the irreligion of Shakspere, had he thought it necessary to profit by the labour of Bowdler, which he has passed unnoticed. But Mr. Knight, by thrusting forward the contrary, making himself a judge, calling the matter into question, setting himself against such high authorities as Warburton, Johnson, and Gifford, and apparently wishing to impose upon the public where their highest interests are at stake — requires the subject to be examined, which is much more easily debated than the textual interference of a Bowdler. Warburton and Johnson have noticed as little as possible the offences of Shakspere against religion; they have entered their protest against them generally, that the public, if they saw them, might be led by their authority and not by Shakspere's. The bishop and the doctor probably thought it was better not to point out passages and make objections in detail; plays were not fitting places to argue points of religion; the public would not see them or were forewarned against them; but the Rev. Charles Knight steps in where angels feared to tread, and recommends them to the public. The Rubicon being passed, those who see the danger and defend the truth, may be excused taking upon themselves some risks in fighting its battle.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

THAT the religious lunatic and the lover are of imagination all compact, we find exemplified in this play. Not only do the lovers talk the greatest extravagance in expressing their attachment to each other whilst they have thoughts of remaining upon earth, but they transfer their faith to a future state where they are to continue it—almost the only instance in Shakspere's plays, and probably conceived by him to be the fair right of the poet—third in the triumvirate of midsummer night dreamers.

Antony does speak like a madman of his love.

> *Ant* Let Rome in Tiber melt! and the wide arch
> Of the rang'd empire fall! here is my space;
> Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike
> Feeds beast as man; the nobleness of life
> Is to do thus, when such a mutual pair,
> And such a twain can do't; in which, I bind,
> On pain of punishment, the world to weet,
> We stand up peerless.

In a strain of materialism he points at the want of difference, rather than its reality, between man and the animals of the earth; and all the nobleness of life, about which there is so much dispute, and which Christians say consists in the immortality of the soul, was, with Antony, a kiss. The nobleness of life, which was denied by the Duke of Vienna, 'thou art not noble,' in not admitting its immortality—and shewing its mortality common with the rest of things, is here ridiculed in a kiss. Space, the only idea we have of eternity, infinity, immortality, is reduced to the dimensions of a kiss. Language, which might befit a prophet speaking of the vanity of this world, in comparison with the hopes of futurity, is made the means of comparing past, present, and the future with a momentary embrace.

The omnipotence of love, the fate of the play, which destroys all other will in Antony, is thus delivered in the beginning as the conception of future events. However unlike reality, however strange, this is the reality, and next the supernatural steps in as the fate, which tries to foresee the causes and prophecy the events resulting from them. Charmian says to the Soothsayer:—

> Is this the man?—Is't you, sir, that know things?
> *Sooth.* In nature's infinite book of Secrecy,
> A little I can read.

Here is a person supposed to be endowed with prescience, the foundation of which, in the nature of things, was explained by Warwick to King Henry IV. The Soothsayer himself makes it a question of things, and of matter.

When Charmian says:—

> Good sir, give me good fortune.
> *Sooth.* I make not, but foresee.
> *Char.* Let me have a child at fifty, to whom Herod of Jewry may do homage.

Is not this in ridicule of the old women among the Jews, who were said to have produced their prophets after the time of child-bearing, particularly Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist? Was it not, also, a reflection on the Saviour himself, said to be expected, and to whom Herod was said to wish to do homage?

Charmian, on some sarcasm of the Soothsayer, says:—

> Out, fool! I forgive thee for a witch.

Which showed the temper of Shakspere towards such offenders, and his idea, which ranked prophets, soothsayers, and witches together. Enobarbus says their fortunes will be drunk to night. He was a sturdy warrior, an honest soldier, but given to the vice to which all the characters of the play have an addiction—excessive, hard drinking. These are traits of character, drawn, we should say, rather from Shakspere and his times, than naturally belonging to all the Romans. We should say, therefore, that Shakspere wrote it in the character of Shakspere, not to suit the characters of Enobarbus, Augustus, Lepidus, Pompey, Antony, and Cleopatra.

We do not think it reverential in Shakspere giving prayers and amens to Charmian and Iras, though they be addressed to the goddess Isis, mixed up, as they are, with gross obscenity.

Nor do we think the speech of Enobarbus reverential on the death of Fulvia, Antony's wife. It is a speech the sentiment of which towards the Creator and preserver of mankind we have often noticed in Shakspere.

Eno. Why, sir, give the gods a thankful sacrifice. When it pleaseth their deities to take the wife of a man from him, it shows to man the tailors of the earth; comforting therein, that when old robes are worn out, there are members to make new.

Ant. Much is breeding;
Which, like the courser's hair, hath yet but life,
And not a serpent's poison.

The idea of equivocal generation, as it is called, or self-producing things.

Cleopatra ridicules oaths 'shaking' the gods; and speaks of their loves in the style Antony did of the kiss, eternity and the race of heaven in themselves and their dalliance, which seems rather more than poetical divinity brought down to humanity.

Antony says:—

Hear me, Queen:
The strong necessity of time commands
Our services awhile.

Lepidus says of his faults:—

I must not think there are
Evils enow to darken all his goodness.
His faults in him seem as the spots of heaven,
More fiery by night's blackness; hereditary,
Rather than purchased; what he cannot change,
Than what he chooses.

This is the defence of necessity.

Pompey (in the society of Menecrates and Menes, two pirates) says:—

If the great gods be just, they shall assist
The deeds of justest men.

Men. Know, worthy Pompey,
That what they do delay, they not deny.

Pom. While we are suitors to their throne, decays
The thing we sue for.
Men. We, ignorant of ourselves,
Beg often our own harm, which the wise powers
Deny us for our good; so find we profit,
By losing of our prayers.

The moral of this is, that we need not pray, for we do not get what we ask for, neither do we know what to ask for. According to what Pompey thought of himself, the gods were not just; in the coming contest his cause succumbed. Thus Shakspere introduces religion generally to prove its inutility.

Eno. Every time
Serves for the matter that is then born in it.

He says of Cleopatra :—

For vilest things
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
Bless her when she is riggish.

Cleopatra says :—

We use
To say the dead are well.

Pompey calls Augustus, Antony, and Lepidus 'chief factors for the gods.'

Enobarbus says of the reconciliation, by marriage, of Octavia to Antony, between him and Augustus :—

If I were bound to divine of this unity, I would not prophesy.

He says Octavia is of a 'holy, cold, and still conversation'—qualities which Shakspere makes go together.

Lepidus says :—

Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud, by the operation of your sun: so is your crocodile.

Here we have equivocal generation still more plainly expressed. Antony says of it :—

It is shaped, sir, like itself; and it is as broad as it hath breadth: it is just so high as it is, and moves with its own organs: it lives by that which nourisheth it; and the elements once out of it, it transmigrates.

This is philosophical, and in ridicule of philosophical description. Octavia says 'the gods will mock her prayers,'

having to pray for her husband and her brother, whose interests are opposed. Cæsar says to her:—

> Cheer your heart.
> Be you not troubled with the time, which drives
> O'er your content these strong necessities;
> But let determin'd things to destiny
> Hold unbewail'd their way. Welcome to Rome.
> Nothing more dear to me. You are abus'd
> Beyond the mark of thought; and the high gods,
> To do you justice, make their ministers
> Of us, and those that love you. Best of comfort;
> And ever welcome to us.

Thus can the irreligious talk to the religious, and all parties claim the assistance of the gods, amidst their neutrality and the course of events.

Materially and characteristically do Canidius and Scarus speak of events as the ruin of Antony. Antony's lunacy in love becomes a sad reality. Antony, in his misfortunes, admits the power which he confessed in his prosperity. He speaks of it in comparison with any higher power, in the same tone of impiety as a heathen—which Shakspere says of Christians—as Iago said Othello was moved by Desdemona.

> *Ant.* O'er my spirit
> Thy full supremacy thou knew'st; and that
> Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods
> Command me.

Still of fortune he says:—

> Fortune knows,
> We scorn her most when most she offers blows.

In answer to the inquiry of Cleopatra—

> Is Antony, or we, in fault for this?

Enobarbus says:—

> Antony only, that would make his will
> Lord of his reason.
> I see, men's judgments are
> A parcel of their fortunes; and things outward
> Do draw the inward quality after them,
> To suffer all alike.

Cleopatra says to the messenger of Augustus, partly in reverence, partly in irony:—

He is a God, and knows
What is most right.
Ant. Now gods and devils!
O, that I were
Upon the hill of Basan, to outroar
The horned herd!

This ridicules the Psalms of David. Put in the mouth of a pagan, Antony, instead of David, makes it worse; and used by Shakspere in conjunction with his favourite joke on the horns of cuckolds, makes the profanation still greater. Johnson says, 'It is not without pity and indignation that the reader of this great poet meets so often with this low jest, which is too much a favourite to be left out of either mirth or fury.' It is probable that his indignation was excited here, as it was at the impiety of the Duke in Measure for Measure, on account of religion being made the medium of the jest.

Knight charges commentators with 'distorting Shakspere into indelicacy.' On the passage just above, the occasion of the remark, Mr. Knight seems justified in it. But it cannot be generally said, particularly in this play, that they were under any necessity, except judging from the character of Shakspere and his writings, of 'distorting him into indelicacy,' any more than distorting what Mr. Knight might call reverential passages into irreverence. It is only in this instance that Mr. Knight mentions Shakspere's indelicacy, in order to attack his commentators and defend him from the charge, and leaves his readers to suppose he was as free from it as from irreverence. But in the matter of distortion, in the way of metamorphosing irreligion into religion, we should say Mr. Knight had proved a master in the art.

Ant. The wise gods seal our eyes
In our own filth; drop our clear judgments, make us
Adore our errors, laugh at us while we strut
To our confusion.
My good stars, that were my former guides,
Have empty left their orbs, and shot their fires
Into the abysm of hell.

He says he will send to darkness his enemies, and of the tears of his friends, that they make 'grace grow.' To Scarus, on the entrance of Cleopatra, he says:—

To this great Fairy I'll commend thy acts.

We use such language to Deity. Cleopatra answers in the same strain, 'Lord of Lords! O infinite virtue'—a mode of expression we use towards the divinity—Christian rather than pagan speaking—and here the attributes are given to a man. His idea of Godhead he gives in praising Scarus :—

He hath fought to-day,
As if a god in hate of mankind had
Destroyed in such a shape.

Enobarbus commits suicide in remorse for having left Antony and gone over to Augustus. Antony prepares to do the same on suspicion that Cleopatra has betrayed him to Cæsar. He says :—

Oh, sun, thy uprise shall I see no more:
Fortune and Antony part here, even here
Do we shake hands.

Man, in his changes of fortune, he likens to clouds, and himself to one departing. On Eros weeping, he says :—

There is left us
Ourselves to end ourselves.

When he hears of the reported suicide of Cleopatra, he is in the situation of Romeo—she not being dead.

Ant. Dead then?
Mer. Dead.
Ant. Unarm me, Eros; the long day's task is done,
And we must sleep.

Shakspere then beautifully introduces the future state of the heathen poets—it cannot be said involving his belief any more than theirs, much less his which was required in Christian times to be of another character. The introduction of the shades below is therefore suitable only to the character of the age in which the person spoke. Antony, who seems to have renounced all hope when he thought Cleopatra was unfaithful to him, on hearing of her death out of love to him, gives way to all the illusion of hope. He who had denied everything else, claims an immortality of spirit to his love, to their conjoint souls, as he had set it above this world, the other, other beings, and death. He says :—

I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and
Weep for my pardon. So it must be, for now
At length is torture:—Since the torch is out,
Lie down, and stray no further: Now all labour
Mars what it does: yea, very force entangles
Itself with strength: Seal then, and all is done.—
Eros!—I come, my queen:—Eros!—Stay for me:
Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,
And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze:
Dido and her Æneas shall want troops,
And all the haunt be ours.—Come, Eros, Eros!

Eros. What would my lord?

Ant. Since Cleopatra died,
I have liv'd in such dishonour, that the gods
Detest my baseness. I, that with my sword
Quarter'd the world, and o'er green Neptune's back
With ships made cities, condemn myself to lack
The courage of a woman; less noble mind
Than she, which, by her death, our Cæsar tells,
'I am conqueror of myself.'

It is only on account of her death, for he has just heard it. Eros kills himself rather than Antony.

Ant. Thrice nobler than myself!
Thou teachest me, O valiant Eros, what
I should, and thou could'st not. My queen and Eros
Have, by their brave instruction, got upon me
A nobleness in record: But I will be
A bridegroom in my death, and run into't
As to a lover's bed. Come then; and Eros
Thy master dies thy scholar; to do thus [*Falling on his sword.*
I learn'd of thee. How! not yet dead? not dead?—
The guard?—ho!—O, despatch me.

He has said, shall he be less noble than she is? and he here again repeats that it is nobler not to be than to be. Even the gods are made to think it baseness in living, and Cæsar is to say, what has been said as the encomium of Brutus, that he was conqueror of himself. He speaks as Claudio did to his sister of meeting death, as a bridegroom, and puts it to the proof.

Ant. Nay, good my fellows, do not please sharp Fate
To grace it with your sorrows. Bid that welcome
Which comes to punish us, and we punish it
Seeming to bear it lightly. Take me up.

I have led you oft, carry me now, good friends;
And have my thanks for all.
Cleo. O thou sun,
Burn the great sphere thou mov'st in!—darkling stand
The varying shore o' th' world! O Antony!

It will not be necessary to continue quoting their alternate speeches on love and suicide. Sufficient to say, their religion, their fate is a kiss; as it was their all in all at the beginning, so it is their only comfort at the last sad end. Was their religion a fact, she says, it should be accomplished in lifting him up to heaven; but this is the hope and faith of fools; the only certainty is to die in the joy of life, what was life to him, a kiss. If it could restore the ebbing life, or dead give him another life, and if her religion promised such a regeneration, or such a resurrection—then would she devote her lips to his continual service. Nor does Shakspere forget to make her rail at the powers, though she knows her invectives to be as inefficacious as her prayers. Antony dies, proclaiming the nobler part to act is suicide—that it is base and cowardly to die in any other way than by self-destruction.

All commentators have agreed in the pains Shakspere has taken in making Antony the hero of the play; we do not think, therefore, that he would have given him reiterated sentiments contrary to his own, but rather that he studied to make them pass with his audience, when their more simple enunciation might not have recommended him in his hero to a Christian world.

Iras. Royal Egypt! Empress!
Char. Peace, peace, Iras.
Cleo. No more but in a woman, and commanded
By such poor passion as the maid that milks,
And does the meanest chares!—It were for me
To throw my sceptre at the injurious gods:
To tell them that this world did equal theirs,
'Till they had stolen our jewel. All's but naught.
Patience is sottish, and impatience does
Become a dog that's mad. Then is it sin
To rush into the secret house of death,
Ere death dare come to us? how do you, women?
What, what? Good cheer! Why, how now, Charmian?
My noble girls!—ah, women, women; look,
Our lamp is spent, 'tis out—Good sirs, take heart,



We'll bury him; and then what's brave, what's noble,
Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,
And make Death proud to take us. Come away;
This case of that huge spirit now is cold.
Ah, women, women! come, we have no friend
But resolution and the briefest end.

The above elaborate defence of suicide is put into the mouth of Cleopatra. The audience are asked, as it were, to excuse a deed which might be repugnant to their principles, but which she gives argument to opinion in favour of, not without philosophical reflection on her equality with all mankind, even in the strength of her passions, and not without some impiety towards heaven. Whatever she was above a woman in possessing Antony, she is now no more—her life, her religion, her hope, her faith, are taken away in him. This produces the reflection that she was not only superior to everything on earth, but to everything offered to man, here and hereafter, on the part of heaven. The general conclusion is, 'all's but naught'—the nothing of Macbeth—and the consequence that, without hope, patience is sottish, and impatience is becoming those who are deprived of their reason; they have cause to stay in this world who have lost all hope, and whose patience can only result from stupidity, bereft of their senses in another way. This heathen woman has none of the fears of after death—death must come, we have to face it and its dreads, whether we meet it or it meets us. In the spirit of poetry, Cleopatra represents it, not as a sin, but making the person, or god, whose office it is to give death, proud in being deprived of it by a woman after so noble a fashion. The want of which resolution was the characteristic of Hamlet, and turned him from his, but not Cleopatra from her enterprise. The same praise is accorded to suicide in Dercetas's account to Cæsar of Antony's death. Cæsar is made to think that evidence of pity would meet with the rebuke of the gods, as if vengeance only, and not mercy, was their attribute. Agrippa says nature compels us, though he thinks it extraordinary, as we are the authors of what we lament. Agrippa, too, pays Antony the compliment we mentioned before, almost equal to the praise of Brutus.

Augustus appeals to necessity—either himself or Antony must have fallen. He laments—

That our stars,
Unreconcileable, should have divided
Our equalness to this.

Cleo. My desolation does begin to make
A better life; 'tis paltry to be Cæsar:
Not being fortune, he's but fortune's knave,
A minister of her will, and it is great
To do that thing that ends all other deeds;
Which shackles accidents, and bolts up change;
Which sleeps, and never palates more the dung;
The beggar's nurse, and Cæsar's.

The same conclusion as in the Duke's speech to Claudio—not the desolation which makes us repentant, seeking a better life in reformation of the old one, or in a future state of existence. 'Tis paltry to be great, 'because we are not ourselves;' we cannot be, we are not masters of ourselves, we have not free-will, we are not fortune herself, we are her tool and fool, as we have been told of other causes—we are ministers of other wills, we have no will of our own. We are all equally ignoble, as the Duke said, because nursed by the same baseness. Nothing can be more necessitarian and material, while again suicide is glorified.

She tells the messenger from Cæsar she is 'his fortune's vassal.' Prevented stabbing herself by Proculeius, who tells her she is relieved, she says:—

What, of death too, that rids our dogs of languish?

Where art thou, death?
Come hither, come: oh come, and take a Queen
Worth many babes and beggars.

Sir, I will eat no meat, I'll not drink, sir:
If idle talk will once be necessary,
I'll not sleep neither. This mortal house I'll ruin,
Do Cæsar what he can.

She says to Dolabella:—

Nature wants stuff
To vie strange forms with fancy, yet t' imagine
An Antony, were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,
Condemning shadows quite.

Shadows are the fancy of material things, as imagination is of humanity, which, as Macbeth said, was the shadow of matter. In all the above of Cleopatra we can only see a

mixture of impiety and materialism. She speaks of her fallen condition as the 'ashes of my chance.'

> *Cleo.* He words me, girls, he words me,
> That I should not be noble to myself.
> But hark thee, Charmian.
> *Iras.* Finish, good lady. The bright day is done,
> And we are for the dark.

Again it is delivered in the question of to be or not to be —that it is nobler not to be. It may be said that Hamlet was perpetually wording himself from his enterprises, actions, and resolutions. Not so Cleopatra and her girls. Cleopatra is a sort of Mary Queen of Scots, who makes not only powers, but their servants, faithless to their trusts. Dolabella informs her of the intentions of Cæsar, that she may make the best use of her time :—

> Madam, as thereto sworn, by your command,
> Which my love makes religion to obey.

She says of the Clown who brings her the asp :—

> Let him come in. What poor an instrument
> May do a noble deed !—He brings me liberty.
> My resolution's plac'd, and I have nothing
> Of woman in me ; now from head to foot
> I'm marble constant ; now the fleeting moon
> No planet is of mine.

When Cleopatra asks him of the asp, 'Will it eat me ?'—

Clown. You must not think me so simple, but I know the devil himself will not eat a woman ; I know that a woman is a dish for the gods, if the devil dress her not. But, truly, these same whoreson devils do the gods great harm in their women, for in every ten that they make, the devils mar five.

The idea is that the devils would not damn a woman, out of courtesy they would save her—that both gods and devils are subjects to sensual affection—that the gods would get hold of the women, if the devils did not anticipate them. The truth that, though the gods make women for their own uses, the devils share half, is the impiety usually given to every clown. It cannot be said, in excuse, that such was the pagan superstition concerning the gods.

Shakspere, by introducing the devils, has made it modern

religion; he has, from Scripture and the version of the age, seen afterwards in Milton, shown that the good and the evil powers were perpetually in conflict, disturbing the creation, and marring its results. The objects of dispute, as they were to the sons of God, he has supposed to be the daughters of men.

Cleopatra prepares to die, not with any humility, but in her robe and crown, as she met Antony on the Cydnus, when she represented the Queen of Love. She did not think Venus would be jealous of her, but was going to the gods and goddesses in heaven as superior to them, to dispossess them. This is not religion, but the mockery of it. Is not the belief Shakspere's? It cannot be said to have been Antony's or Cleopatra's. It is fine poetry in Shakspere, and pride of heart in Cleopatra, which, conscious of the reality of its fall, of its own impotence, bears itself up against earth and heaven, gods and men, life and death.

Cleo. Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have
Immortal longings in me. Now no more
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.
Yare, yare, good Iras; quick. Methinks I hear
Antony call, I see him rouse himself
To praise my noble act. I hear him mock
The luck of Cæsar, which the gods give men
To excuse their after-wrath. Husband, I come;
Now to that name my courage prove my title!
I am fire and air; my other elements
I give to baser life. So———have you done?
Come then, and take the last warmth of my lips.
Farewell, kind Charmian. Iras, long farewell. [*Iras falls.*
Have I the aspic in my lips? dost fall?
If thou and nature can so gently part,
The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,
Which hurts, and is desir'd. Dost thou lie still?
If thus thou vanishest, thou tell'st the world,
It is not worth leave-taking.

Char. Dissolve, thick cloud, and rain, that I may say,
The gods themselves do weep.

Cleo. This proves me base:—
If she first meets the curled Antony,
He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss,
Which is my heav'n to have. Come, mortal wretch,
With thy sharp teeth this knot intrinsicate
Of life at once untie; poor venomous fool,

Be angry, and dispatch. Oh, couldst thou speak,
That I might hear thee call great Cæsar ass,
Unpolicied!

Char. O eastern star!

Cleo. Peace, peace!
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?

Char. O break! O break!

Cleo. As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle,
O Antony!—Nay, I will take thee too.———
What, should I stay——— [*Dies.*

Char. In this wild world? so, fare thee well.
Now, boast thee, Death; in thy possession lies
A lass unparallel'd. Downy windows, close;
And golden Phœbus never be beheld
Of eyes again so royal! Your crown's awry;
I'll mend it, and then play——

Yet it is language which, with some alteration, might be put in the mouth of a Christian, in the certainty of salvation. This makes it worse, when Antony is to awake from death in heaven to praise her suicide—when the gods are reproached as only giving good to purchase the enjoyment of evil. Her suicide is to prove her right to entitle Antony her husband. What a qualification for the favours of heaven. Thus was to be decided the question in the Scriptures to whom belonged the man who had died, having had seven wives. The concluding words were according to the popular idea of all times, that the invisible was not material, that air and fire parted from matter, where spiritual immortality might dwell.

As usual, Shakspere spreads the repast of death more than he has a warrant for: six have died in this play by suicide. If precept is taught by example, Antony and Cleopatra must have been written in eulogy of self-slaughter. The last surviving victim, on summing up the catastrophe with her own death, cries 'It is well done.' And Cæsar says, as Malcolm did of Cawdor, 'Bravest at the last;' and hearing of Charmian's suicide, says—'O noble weakness.' We cannot help thinking, therefore, that Shakspere, in this play, did solve his own question, and thought it nobler not to be than to be. He speaks with an energy and a repetition which betrays himself.

Not in character, but out of character, he makes women defend and praise, as well as prove, the deed. Whereas we can only see the poet in speaking of a future state, and not the moralist didactically proving and impressing his hearers, as in other plays, with the belief in the reasons that there is a future state. Here it is admitted as poetry, and to heighten the effect of love, though denied when the same characters are made to speak rationally, naturally, and argumentatively. It is given as a hope, not as a belief; not arising from religion, not exactly from the love of life in oneself; it was a sense of existence which only in the conscious reciprocity of each other's love transported them beyond this world. In this world they were in another as long as their love lasted, and the next world could give them nothing more. In heathenism, a future state could be but a hope, it could not be proved; but in the Christian system it is a certainty, which Shakspere, then, never adopts but tries to disprove. The Christian revelation of a future state does not enter into his poetry, unless it be the pageantry of angels in the vision of Henry's Catherine, but its terrors he perpetually holds up to the detestation and ridicule of mankind.



CYMBELINE.

'HIS play, according to Campbell, succeeds Julius Cæsar, .ntony and Cleopatra. There are, apparently, some remiiscences of its predecessors contained in its lines. There is)me prolongation of a leading idea in the two former plays. . future state seems still a question; but in no play, except leasure for Measure, does Shakspere appear more unequiocally to pronounce against the belief. As is his usual ustom, he seems to have introduced a character and dia)gue on death unnecessarily to ridicule the ideas of any fter state which the necessity of character and poetical tness had justified him for the time in entertaining. A Gentleman says of himself and fellow courtiers:—

> Our bloods
> No more obey the heavens, than our courtiers
> Still seem as does the king.
> *Cym.* Past grace? obedience?
> *Ima.* Past hope, and in despair; that way, past grace.

Is this reverential, talking the divinity of the times in the tyle of one of the thirty-nine articles?

Iachimo says to Posthumus:—

> I see you have some religion in you, that you fear.

Posthumus is a religious character. Lucretius and others ay fear is the origin of religion. Cloten says:—

> A whoreson jackanapes must take me up for swearing:

vhich, of course, is not suitable to character or situation, ut was to make the audience laugh at the restraint of the 'uritans upon a practice which required curtailing in Shakpere's writings, and his hearers' habits.

Iachimo, on seeing Imogen sleeping, says:—

> O Sleep, thou ape of death, lie dull upon her!

Shakspere gives a natural religion—the adoration of the heavens—as a part of instruction in the courtier to his untutored wards. This banished courtier is not a man of much honesty by his own confession. He is one of Shakspere's numerous characters, doing wrong because wronged—a contrast with which, in example and precept, Shakspere often beautifully introduces. The case in this play; and by how much he makes virtue fairer than vice, forgiveness of injuries better than revenge, he must be considered, not only in detached sentiments, but in his main purpose, a great moral writer. The moral belongs to him, and not exclusively to his characters; it can be separated from them, and why not his religion or irreligion?

Imogen tells Pisanio, the servant of her husband, to obey his commands and put her to death. She would do it herself, she says, but that—

> 'Gainst self-slaughter
> There is a prohibition so divine
> That cravens my weak hand.

This was the sentiment at times of Hamlet; but, if Shakspere really thought it, and was impressed with its consideration, why did he falsely ascribe it to religion, and so often give argument to opinion against it? She speaks of the letters of Posthumus in terms rather too strong and sacred for such a subject, but quite in the spirit of Shakspere, who has recently made of love a religion.

> *Imo.* ——What is here?
> The scriptures of the loyal Leonatus
> All turn'd to heresy? Away, away,
> Corrupters of my faith! you shall no more
> Be stomachers to my heart; thus may poor fools
> Believe false teachers: Though those that are betray'd
> Do feel the treason sharply, yet the traitor
> Stands in worse case of woe.

As if in allusion to 'it were better a mill-stone were tied round their necks.'

Cloten puts on the garments of Posthumus to do violence to Imogen.

Clo. How fit his garments serve me! Why should his mistress, who was made by him that made the tailor, not be fit too? the rather (saving reverence of the word) for 'tis said, a woman's fitness comes by fits. Therein I must play the workman.



This seems a reminiscence of the idea of Enobarbus in Antony and Cleopatra, that God was a tailor, and made women to fit men. It was not reverential there, nor is it here. It seems to have struck Shakspere so, as he talks of reverence after it as Hamlet did when he ventured on the same sarcasms at the divine creation of man.

Arviragus says to Imogen:—

> Brother, stay here.
> Are we not brothers?——
> *Imo.* So man and man should be;
> But clay and clay differs in dignity,
> Whose dust is both alike.

This is a fine moral, with one of Shakspere's material conclusions to support it.

Guiderius, in answer to Cloten, who asks him if he knows not his clothes, repeats the idea of Cloten in his soliloquy on man-making and tailoring.

> *Clot.* Thou villain base,
> Know'st me not by my clothes?
> *Guid.* No, nor thy tailor, rascal,
> Who is thy grandfather; he made those clothes,
> Which, as it seems, make thee.

This, affirmed positively, and coming from a child of nature, (his ideas of creation blended with the ridiculous) seems the more impious. Guiderius explains his character, and that of Shakspere.

> *Clot.* Art not afear'd?
> *Guid.* Those that I reverence, those I fear, the wise;
> At fools I laugh, not fear them.

We are afraid Shakspere had only reverence for the wisdom of this world; what he considered folly or lunacy, viz., the considerations of another world, he had no reverence for.

Arviragus says of his brother's deed, the death of Cloten, and its consequences:—

> Let ordinance
> Come, as the gods foresay it; howsoe'er
> My brother hath done well.
> *Bel.* O thou goddess,
> Thou divine Nature, how thyself thou blazon'st
> In these two princely boys!

Guid. Cadwal,
I cannot sing; I'll weep, and word it with thee;
For notes of sorrow out of tune are worse
Than priests and fanes that lie.

This idea of religion put in the mouth of a child of nature, ignorant of priestcraft, and when all religion was one, who could not well know the sentiment, was not suited to the character, but belonged to Shakspere.

Belarius repeats:—

Though mean and mighty, rotting
Together, have one dust, yet Reverence,
That angel of the world, doth make distinction
Of place 'twixt high and low.
Guid. Pray fetch him hither.
Thersites' body is as good as Ajax,
When neither are alive.

The brothers then sing over him a requiem, the burden of which is that he has not to fear the ills of life, which Shakspere has given so many catalogues of, and that all alike come to dust. The lightning flash and the thunder storm which cannot touch him, are generally given as expressions of the attributes of heaven, and would probably be so considered by such characters as the speakers. Such an introduction looks, therefore, like one of Shakspere's defiances of the other world.

A very religious poet, Collins, has substituted another song for the obsequies of Fidele, or Imogen. Was it that he did not like the material strain of such an incantation over the dead, and to show the difference between what the wisdom of this world, and that derived from another, would write? Warburton says of Shakspere's song, 'This is the topic of consolation that nature dictates to all men on these occasions. The same farewell we have over the dead body in Lucian.' Yes, nature, but not religion; and the same farewell being given by an infidel author, Lucian, only makes it the more probable that Shakspere held the sentiments they expressed in common. These brothers, fond as they are of Fidele, never express a hope of meeting her in death, after they are released from the ills of life they congratulate her on being spared. No, quiet consummation is the word for all. It may be said that, in the Scriptures, the sentiment that from dust we

come and to dust we shall return, is common. But Warburton has shown that, in the Pentateuch at least, there is no mention of a future state; and in the rest of the Old Testament there are very slight traces of the idea: it is not introduced as a belief. It was reserved for the new dispensation, in the example of its revealer, to prove a resurrection. The common use of these words and sentiments by Shakspere and the writers of the Old Testament only show their common purposes and belief.

Belarius, who did not sing, says, over Imogen and Cloten:—

> The ground that gave them first has them again:
> Their pleasure here is past, so is their pain

More commonly, as thinking little of life, Shakspere makes death the end of the cares rather than the joys of life, the *cura* rather than the *gaudia*. The ancients generally put them together. Cæsar, a man of pleasure, speaking of another man of pleasure, Catiline, gives both. Cicero, more serious, only the *cura*. These expressions have been adduced against them as material.

Imogen, on awaking, says:—

> Good faith
> I tremble still with fear: But if there be
> Yet left in heav'n as small a drop of pity
> As a wren's eye, fear'd gods! a part of it!

This is one of the many sentences 'blaspheming God out of heaven,' as an author called them, which abound in Shakspere. Here this scepticism of the mercy of heaven is given to a woman, and expressed with more gentleness than by the men; but was it suitable to feminine character? Ought it to have been introduced in a prayer to a higher power? When she is asked by Lucius, the Roman general, who she is? she answers:—

> I am nothing; or if not,
> Nothing to be were better.

In giving a false name to the body, she says:—

> Richard du Champ. If I do lie, and do
> No harm by it, though the gods hear, I hope
> They'll pardon it.

Pisanio says immediately afterwards:—

Wherein I'm false I'm honest; not true to be true.

That the end justifies the means we believe was the morality of Shakspere—that the measure of truth or falsehood was in the consequences, and, by reason of those, might change places, truth become falsehood, and falsehood truth, from the nature of things and not of words.

Posthumus says:—

—Gods, if you
Should have ta'en vengeance on my faults, I ne'er
Had liv'd to put on this; so had you sav'd
The noble Imogen to repent; and struck
Me, wretch, more worth your vengeance. But alack
You snatch some hence for little faults; that's love,
To have them fall no more; you some permit
To second ills with ills, each elder worse,
And make them dread it to the doer's thrift.

This is spoken reproachingly of heaven, and seems the irony of Shakspere on a Providence, or a sort of denial of its interference by a description of the course of nature. After this objurgation, however, this objection to the ways of Providence, and pointing out how it might have done something else, he says:—

But Imogen's your own. Do your best wills,
And make me blest t' obey!

Very religious! but coming in this place, from Shakspere, it appears merely the assumption of such language, given to make character, or in irony of the pious.

Posthumus, in prison, delivers himself of a long soliloquy. He speaks of death being the physician who cures us of our ills, partly as Roderigo in Othello. He prefers his lot to that of those whom Claudio envied under every possible affliction. Not being a Christian, though very Christian-like, he had no dread of an after life, which Hamlet surmised might be, and which Claudio pictured in heterodox and orthodox realities. He asks:—

Is't enough I'm sorry?
So children temporal fathers do appease;
Gods are more full of mercy.
I know you are more clement than vile men,
Who of their broken debtors take a third,
A sixth, a tenth, letting them thrive again
On their abatement: that's not my desire;

> For Imogen's dear life take mine; and though
> 'Tis not so dear, yet 'tis a life; you coined it.
> 'Tween man and man they weigh not every stamp,
> Though light, take pieces for the figure's sake;
> You rather mine, being yours; and so, great Powers,
> If you will take this audit, take this life,
> And cancel those cold bonds. Oh, Imogen!
> I'll speak to thee in silence.

The relation between debtors and creditors is a Jewish injunction in the Scriptures coming from divine inspiration, and surely to take part is more merciful than to take the whole.

After having just told the gods that they are more merciful than men, and then giving an example of it in what would prove them less merciful, he ridicules Providence and prayer, which says forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. This may not be intentionally irreverential on the part of Shakspere—it may be only the failure of an endeavour to give religion to character, which Shakspere was not equal to, not feeling it, though he borrowed from the sources of revealed religion; which, recoined by him, cannot pass as true piety. He had been too much exercised in the craft of irreligion.

Johnson says of the last lines, 'This equivocal use of bonds is another instance of our author's infelicity in pathetic speeches.' He might have said in religious, and we think he thought this of the rest of the speech. We think Shakspere has shown no felicity in putting a religious speech into the mouth of one condemned to die, crowned as it is with a bad pun—but much more felicity in unburdening himself in mockery of heaven and the gods, which he immediately proceeds with in an apparition he shows to Posthumus. After having put a sort of Christian speech in the mouth of Posthumus, giving him some religious expressions sadly tortured, in Aristophanic manner and language he introduces Providence on the stage to be made subject of ridicule and invective.

Pope, to extricate Shakspere, supposes the whole vision to be an interpolation. At once we point out a sentiment coincident in Lear.

The father of Posthumus, Sicilius, begins:—

> No more, thou thunder-master, show
> Thy spite on mortal flies.

Here we have the idea that he is the disposer of the thunder storm no more to be feared in death; and the idea of Gloster in Lear, that he shows his spite on us as boys make sport with flies.

> With Mars fall out, with Juno chide,
> That thy adulteries
> Rates and revenges.——

Then the father asks if his son has done aught but well; and says that dying before his son was born, Posthumus attended nature's law, irrespective of Providence; but that men reported of Jupiter, as we do of God, that he was the orphan's father, which he ought to have shown, and protected him from the world's disasters.

The mother begins by reproaching Lucina for dying in child-bed, and that her child came crying into the world amongst foes, a thing of pity. Whilst nothing but ill is said of the gods, respect is shown to nature as if a distinct power. This mother says that he was mocked with calamities; and Sicilius asks of the gods 'why did they suffer them?' After the family have respectively recited their merits, and said they deserved better at the hands of divinity, they thus break forth into reproaches:—

> 1 *Bro.* Then, Jupiter, thou king of gods,
> Why hast thou thus adjourn'd
> The graces for his merits due,
> Being all to dolours turned?
> *Sici.* Thy crystal window ope; look out
> No longer exercise,
> Upon a valiant race, thy harsh
> And potent injuries.
> *Moth.* Since, Jupiter, our son is good,
> Take off his miseries.
> *Sici.* Peep through thy marble mansion, help,
> Or we poor ghosts will cry,
> To th' shining synod of the rest,
> Against thy deity.
> 2 *Bro.* Help, Jupiter, or we appeal,
> And from thy justice fly.

Jupiter descends in thunder and lightning, sitting upon an eagle, and throws a thunder-bolt. The ghosts fall on their knees.

Jupit. No more, you petty spirits of region low,
Offend our hearing; hush!—How dare you, ghosts,
Accuse the thunderer, whose bolt you know,
Sky-planted, batters all rebelling coasts?
Poor shadows of Elysium; hence, and rest
Upon your never-withering banks of flowers.
Be not with mortal accidents oppress'd,
No care of yours it is; you know 'tis ours.
Whom best I love I cross; to make my gift
The more delay'd, delighted. Be content,
Your low-laid son our godhead will uplift;
His comforts thrive, his trials well are spent;
Our jovial star reign'd at his birth, and in
Our temple was he married. Rise, and fade!
He shall be Lord of Lady Imogen.
And happier much by his affliction made.
This tablet lay upon his breast, wherein
Our pleasure his full fortune doth confine;
And so, away. No farther with your din
Express impatience, lest you stir up mine.
Mount, eagle, to my palace crystaline.

Shakspere thus far, in the whole of this scene, having disparagingly set forth and ridiculed the notions of Providence in a religious man, by an admixture of the serious and the burlesque, proceeds to reason against and make the subject of his jests his ideas of a future state. The Gaoler enters to tell him he must be hanged, and asks if he is ready for death. Posthumus says he is ever roasted, as if already this world's misfortunes were sufficient hell without any more fire in another. The Gaoler says:—

Hanging is the word, sir; if you be ready for that, you are well cooked.

As if he thought Posthumus might have mistaken his meaning. He was not a ghostly father; he had nothing to do with preparations for death or after death, his office only looked to the readiness for hanging. The Gaoler then is very jocose on the acquittance which death purchases from so many ills:—

O the charity of a penny cord! it sums up thousands in a trice. You have no true debitor or creditor but it. Of what's past, is, and to come the discharger: your neck, sir, is pen, book, and counters; so the acquittance follows.

Here we have the debtor and creditor again of Posthumus's

speech on praying to die—under which form the Christian has been taught to think of the relations between himself and his Maker. However, in a more serious way, though enigmatic of gravity or ridicule, Shakspere may have entrusted it to Posthumus—here, in the mouth of the Gaoler, it is unquestionably made the subject of mirth. When he talks of the mercy of such an acquittance as he has to give, of there being no true debtor and creditor but it, of its being the discharger not only of what is past, is, but what is to come—we can only see in it a previous denial of a future state and judgment, which he next proceeds to controvert as expressed by Posthumus. Posthumus says:—

I am merrier to die than thou art to live.

Signifying that he has some expectation, which the Gaoler showed he had not by his speech. The Gaoler expresses himself rather surprised at having met with a man so different from most of his customers, and human nature in general, and says, though in truth he that sleeps feels not the toothache, yet most men who had to sleep the sleep of Posthumus, and a hangman to help him to bed, would, he thinks, wish to change places with his officer. Having given due weight and consideration to the philosophy of materialism, which was the only comfort he could give those about to die; and his own recommendation of death, the riddance of the thousand natural shocks which flesh is heir to; it seems to strike him that confidence in a future state of happiness may have inspired Posthumus with consolation to die. Therefore, inquiringly and negatively, as no cause for not fearing to die, he says:—

For, look you, sir, you know not which way you shall go.

He is astounded at the reply:—

Yes, indeed, do I, fellow.

This appears to us just what an offended Christian would exclaim. The immortality of the soul questioned, the assurance of a future state doubted, he would express, not only his certain knowledge of such a self-evident fact to himself, which he had not been accustomed to hear disputed, but he

would show his contempt of the supporter of the contrary opinion by some such addition as 'fellow.' The answer of the Gaoler is a summary of the reasons, as he takes them, for people's belief in a future state, whilst he denies, ridicules them, and endeavours to show their irrationality. He says to Posthumus :—

> Your death has eyes in's head then; I have not seen him so pictured: you must either be directed by some that take upon them to know, or take upon yourself that which I am sure you do not know; or jump the after inquiry upon your own peril: and how you shall speed in your journey's end, I think you'll never return to tell me.

It is not his opinion, he says; he does not see with the eyes of believers; and such an interpretation of death has not been taught him. He then proceeds to describe the way in which belief is obtained; as for Posthumus, he says he must have taken it upon trust from others who pretend to know, which is a reflection upon the ordained ministers of religion, the spiritual pastors and masters of the people; or he assumes that without consideration or authority (which he, the Gaoler, is sure Posthumus has no knowledge of), or without inquiry, he relies on the chance of a future state, the result of which he will never return to tell any one.

Montaigne says, 'Whosoever will try over his being and properties, both within and without, and will see man without flattering him, he will see there neither faculty nor graciousness which is conscious of any other thing than earth and earth.

Some make the world believe that they believe that which they do not believe; others, in greater numbers, make themselves believe it to themselves, not knowing what it is which they do believe.'

I would ask whether this second paragraph is not, sentence for sentence, conveyed in the Gaoler's speech? To us it appear unmistakable marks of copying a passage from the write author of Shakspere which agreed with his own sentiments.

Posthumus is made to answer in his previous tone, somedogmatical and personal, in language which anybody controversy will at once acknowledge:—

I tell thee, fellow, there are none want eyes to direct them the way I am going, but such as wink, and will not use them.

Infidels, who trust to their reason, and will not see with the eyes of Christians, are often reproached with wilful blindness, and their error is often ascribed to a want of the mental senses and all moral power of understanding and argument. Had Shakspere even ended here, it might, as a forlorn probability, have been argued that he only intended to give a dialogue on the subject, distributed in equal proportion of quantity and quality to the speakers. It might have been said that he only intended to convey the language of Christianity on the prospects of the soul out of reverence to religion and in compliment to believers. It might have been said, at least, that, whilst satisfying believers, he wished to afford a smile to those initiated in infidelity by putting such bare assertions, such abbreviated and common opinions, into the mouth of Posthumus, to become the mark of the Gaoler. But we can scarcely doubt the intention of the author when he gives the last rejoinder to the Gaoler, and makes him speak in such unmeasured terms and scornful raillery of what Posthumus has just uttered.

Gaol. What an infinite mock is this, that a man should have the best use of eyes, to see the way of blindness! I am sure hanging is the way of winking.

Could Shakspere, when he calls the idea of a future state, the immortality of the soul, the saving truth of Christianity, a mockery of humanity, not to be equalled in extent by any other mockery—have believed in the doctrine? The believer's language given to Posthumus is a mockery, beside the question, like ridicule and abuse, cannot be answered. The Gaoler repeats the physical fact to him, that it is the way of blindness where there is no seeing the blind cave of eternal night—the usual language given by Shakspere to disbelievers on the subject. We cannot believe it possible that Shakspere himself adopted these popular religious opinions, and then gave them the worst appearance in order to be denounced and ridiculed by unbelievers.

Knight says, 'Nothing can be more certain than that the dialogue between Posthumus and the Gaoler is of the period

of deep philosophical speculation.' The deep philosophical speculation must be given to the Gaoler, it cannot be said to belong to the assertions of Posthumus. Knight, in another place, says, 'Walter Whiter has remarked upon it, M. Voltaire himself has nothing comparable to the humourous discussion of the philosophic Gaoler in Cymbeline.' Mr. Walter Whiter gives the humour and the philosophy to the right person. What should make him compare it to Voltaire, but that the drift of the humour and philosophy was in one, as well as in the other, infidelity?

Knight adds to this, 'But it is something more than humourous. It is as profound, under a gay aspect, as some of the highest speculations of Hamlet.' What that something more is Mr. Knight will not say; probably he means a reverence for religion. What he says of the comparison between it and Hamlet, is still more true of it and the dialogues between the Clown and Barnardine, in Measure for Measure, to the same purpose. If something more profound is to be discovered, what is it but scepticism, deeper and deeper still? Mockery is not only ridicule and abuse, but is the hope disappointed with tantalising cruelty

We do not think Shakspere was a believer in the opinions of Posthumus as to a future state, any more than he was of the connection between heaven and earth, and of a special Providence, which he had made Posthumus believe in, and then ridiculed in the preceding part of this scene. Shakspere had, in Lear, made Edmund characterize divine agency in as strong language as the Gaoler used to the other doctrine—'Oh! excellent foppery of this world.'

But Edmund, it will be said, on one, and Barnardine and the Clown on the other point of religious faith, gave but opinions coming from bad men. Shakspere has taken care that that shall not be urged against his gaoler, any more than it could be against his priest and philosopher-duke of Vienna. Whilst Shakspere represents his gaoler as a philosopher, unbeliever, and wit, parleying with the assertions and personalities of his prisoner, directed against himself, he makes him charitable towards Posthumus, and a candid admirer of his belief, which gave him the courage to die. In conclusion, Shakspere makes him the best of men, the most

unselfish, and give utterance to those sentiments of mercy and forgiveness which are found so frequently introduced by precept and example in the writings of Shakspere. After having delivered his opinion of the infinite mockery of words and thoughts, which it will be recollected are always addressed and tried to be impressed by their 'ghostly fathers' on prisoners condemned to die — having found Posthumus in a very proper state to die, and having tried to deprive him of that hope by endeavouring to expose its fallacy, on the exit of his prisoner he thus delivers himself:—

Gaol. Unless a man would marry a gallows, and beget young gibbets, I never saw one so prone. Yet, on my conscience, there are verier knaves desire to live, for all he be a Roman; and there be some of them, too, that die against their wills; so would I, if I were one.

Here we have the idea of Claudio, and in Antony and Cleopatra, of meeting death as a bride, humourously put by the Gaoler. Shakspere made Hamlet influenced by the dread of something after death, and Claudio madly terrified by death or idea of a future state; but it could not be unobserved by Shakspere that there were some men, as Romans, who would calmly face death: and there were others, such as Christian martyrs, and Mahomedan proselytisers by the swords, who, in the certainty of a future state, would rush upon death. Shakspere, therefore, as the poet of nature, who gives every variety of humanity, makes Posthumus accept death as a better life.

The Gaoler confesses he should, as even some Romans, die against his will. He would rather live—then comes an immortal declaration; a touch of nature which makes all mankind kin — and we cannot but think that Shakspere wished sufferance in speculative doctrines as well as agreement in goodness; for religion, in his time, brought opinion to execution as well as evil doers. The Gaoler says:—

I would we were all of one mind, and one mind good; O, there were desolation of gallows and gallowses! I speak against my present profit; but my wish hath a preferment in it.

Virtue has not its reward in this world, as is sometimes affirmed of it, but its reward is in having the sentiment. As the good Gaoler says, the very aspiration after it has a

preferment in it. It does elevate, further than this life, to a higher and future one. As Mackintosh and Coleridge said atheists had a future state in the belief and in the promotion of the progress of humanity, not personal, but of the species and the world to all eternity.

Posthumus, undeceived by Iachimo, and conscious of the fatal results to which he had been driven, calls himself a 'credulous fool,' for whom all punishment was insufficient. Too true!—when we consider the foolish wager to which he had subjected the being who ought to have been most sacred from such a trial; of whose innocence he was most assured, and then most rashly disbelieved on the evidence of one whose life and every interest was pledged to produce such suspicious proof of her guilt. When quitting the manly moderation which he had professed should guide him, should he find her unworthy of his esteem, without taking into consideration his own previous knowledge of her, and without further inquiry into the charges against her, he resolved upon a cruel revenge, which he cowardly committed to the hands of another; we can conceive that, not only his understanding was in fault, but that his heart was vicious in having mistrusted her; that he was ten times more a credulous fool than his prototype Othello, and a barbarian Briton more savage than the black Moor. Shakspere has represented this weak man, but repentant sinner, a religious character, almost a Christian hero.

Though he had thought to have executed vengeance beyond the wildest imagination of justice, Shakspere makes him pardon the external cause, Iachimo, and puts into his mouth his favourite sentiment, and the grand moral of so many of his plays.

Iachimo is a brave man, has no religion, and his error seems to be that of many worldly men, no faith in women, whose lives are to be the mere playthings of the lords of the creation. What he probably thought of no worth in others, he has no love for himself, life; and when he finds what misery he had created, though the objects of it were relieved from the effects of his wickedness, he says it weighs upon his conscience, more than the power of Posthumus over his body, and, kneeling, he tells him to take his life.



Post. Kneel not to me:
The pow'r that I have on you, is to spare you;
The malice tow'rds you to forgive you. Live,
And deal with others better!

Cym. Nobly doom'd:
We'll learn our freeness of a son-in-law;
Pardon's the word to all.

The moral of Measure for Measure, and the words of Posthumus, are in one particular the same, and explain the Duke telling Barnardine 'to live for better times;' is, as Posthumus says, to live and deal with others bett the remainder of this life, without postponing the bet another life.

CORIOLANUS.

THE citizens are introduced to give the character of Coriolanus, and as a chorus to explain the morality of the play. The great feature in the character of Coriolanus is the love of his mother; pride is the antagonist principle: these motive-causes produce his fate, and end in his ruin. He neither loves the gods nor cares for them; his pride is above any idea of their power, he blasphemes them; and as for his services to his country—

> He pays himself with being proud; what he hath done famously he did it to that end, though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country: he did it to please his mother, and to be partly proud, which he is, even to the altitude of his virtues.

'What he cannot help in his nature, you account a vice in him,' says the citizen more friendly to him, which is, that he is governed by necessity, and is not responsible for his actions: what he cannot help is not to be reckoned as, and punished for, a vice.

> *Brutus.* Being mov'd, he will not spare to gird the gods——
> *Sicinius.* Be-mock the modest moon.——

Nevertheless, Shakspere gives Coriolanus his philosophy and morality. As he had said his faults he could not help, were in his nature, and no vice; so he makes him say himself, of his virtues, that he cannot any more help them; that he only does what he can, and has sufficient motive to produce, and not prevent He says to his general:—

> I have done as you have done; that's what I can:
> Induc'd as you have been; that's for my country.
> He that has but effected his good will,
> Hath overta'en mine act.

Because he has to ask a favour of men, Coriolanus says:—

> The gods begin to mock me.

One of the citizens of Rome speaks very metaphysically of the ability of the will to do this and that—to give their voices to Coriolanus or deny him:—

> We have power in ourselves to do it; but it is a power that we have no power to do.

Which might be said of the determinations and results in Coriolanus.

There is a great deal about mockery of gods and men in this play. What was considered mockery of the one, may be taken as a standard of the mockery of the other—except that where the object is more reverential, whatever is said in mockery of it is more aggravated in character.

Brutus says to Coriolanus:—

> You speak o' th' people as you were a god
> To punish, not a man of their infirmity.
> 1*st. Sen.* This man has marr'd his fortune.
> *Men.* His nature is too noble for the world;
> He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
> Or Jove for's power to thunder; his heart's his mouth;
> What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent,
> And, being angry, does forget that ever
> He heard the name of death.

He says to Coriolanus:—

> Repent what you have spoke.
> *Cor.* For them?—I cannot do it for the gods,
> Must I then do't to them?

Volumnia abounds with argument in favour of dissimulation. With equal force of language Coriolanus urges his unwillingness to appear what he is not. From Shakspere's repeated observations on so nice a point of morality, we are inclined to think he may be charged, with Euripides, of asserting sentiments which are not favourable to the preservation of strict integrity in truth.

Volumnia says:—

> Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me:
> But own thy pride thyself.

There are several passages of the same sort in Shakspere, arguing hereditary materialism, and Combe quotes from

Coriolanus in support of the opinion. It is also in Julius Cæsar, in a speech by Brutus to Cassius.

Coriolanus says :—

> Despising
> For you, the city, thus I turn my back:
> There is a world elsewhere.——

No one will say he meant here a future state, though the words might suit it, as in the 'better times' of the Duke of Vienna. Though he professes to his family that his future actions will be guided by the integrity of his past conduct, his fate leads him, not only to forfeit his promises, but to undo his former deeds.

Tullus Aufidius is painted with no more regard for religion than Coriolanus. He had said that—

> Not sleep nor sanctuary,
> Being naked, sick, nor fane, nor capitol,
> The prayers of priests, nor times, nor sacrifice,
> Embarquements of all fury, shall lift up
> Their rotten privilege and custom 'gainst
> My hate to Marcius.

When Coriolanus comes to him as the enemy of Rome, he says :—

> If Jupiter
> Should from yon cloud speak divine things
> And say 'Tis true, I'd not believe them more
> Than thee, all noble Marcius.

Aufidius does 'not spare to gird the gods' less than Coriolanus. Divine things had no place with Shakspere; he judged of the truth of things, though strange, from the wisdom of this world.

The servant says of his master's (Aufidius's) behaviour to Coriolanus :—

> Sanctifies himself with's hand, and turns up the white o' the eye to his discourse.

'Alluding improperly,' says Johnson, 'to the act of crossing upon any strange events.' This was not character, but an anachronism, which Shakspere indulged in to ridicule a religious observance. Similar in expression was the remark of Rosalind on the mass, which drew forth the like abhorrence of the doctor.

Cominius says of Coriolanus's coming to Rome, and the Volscians:—

> If?
> He is their god, he leads them like a thing
> Made by some other deity than nature,
> That shapes man better; and they follow him,
> Against us brats, with no less confidence
> Than boys pursuing summer butterflies,
> Or butchers killing flies.

After ascribing our creation to nature, he presumes that men might have been better made, and gives the workmanship of Coriolanus to some other creator. The succeeding lines seem to assign as the attributes of Coriolanus what had been given by Shakspere to the gods. What he made Gloster say the gods did towards men, Cominius represents Coriolanus and the Volscians as doing to the Romans.

Menenius says he will call upon Coriolanus after his dinner.

> *Men.* I'll undertake it:
> I think he'll hear me. Yet to bite his lip,
> And hum at good Cominius, much unhearts me.
> He was not taken well, he had not din'd.
> The veins unfill'd, our blood is cold, and then
> We pout upon the morning, are unapt
> To give or to forgive; but when we have stuff'd
> These pipes, and these conveyances of our blood
> With wine and feeding, we have suppler souls
> Than in our priest-like fasts. Therefore I'll watch him
> Till he be dieted to my request,
> And then I'll set upon him.

Shakspere's material morality, then, was superior to religion; and he thought to give a better receipt for the promotion of virtue, particularly of charity and love, than the religion of love has prescribed for bringing the soul to the exercise of its influence. There is a good deal about truth and lying between Menenius and the guard of the Volces. Menenius saying that he has done the latter for Coriolanus, on account of his friendship to him.

Menenius is made to assume a superiority over the common watch, in being willing to commit suicide, whilst they are desirous of prolonging a life of misery.

Men. I neither care for the world nor your general. For such things as you, I can scarce think there's any, you are so slight. He

that hath a will to die by himself, fears it not from another. Let your general do his worst. For you, be that your are long, and your misery increase with your age! I say to you, as I was said to, away——

Coriolanus says of Menenius to Aufidius, 'he godded me.'

Cor. My wife comes foremost; then the honour'd mould
Wherein this trunk was framed, and in her hand
The grand-child to her blood. But, out, affection!
All bond and privilege of nature, break!
Let it be virtuous to be obstinate.
What is that curt'sy worth! or those doves' eyes,
Which can make gods forsworn?—I melt, and am not
Of stronger earth than others. My mother bows;
As if Olympus to a molehill should
In supplication nod: and my young boy
Hath an aspect of intercession, which
Great nature cries, 'Deny not.'—Let the Volces
Plough Rome, and harrow Italy; I'll never
Be such a gosling to obey instinct; but stand,
As if a man were author of himself,
And knew no other kin.

The whole scene, while material in language and thought, is the opposite of complimentary to divinity. Coriolanus puts himself above the gods, though he is immediately convinced he is not more than man. The encouragement of himself at the end is of the same kind, impious, though he acknowledges the force of natural causes, which is to overbear his hate and produce his ruin.

Meanwhile Menenius is speaking to the terrified tribunes and people, leaving them no hope out of their despair.

Men. What he bids be done, is finished with his bidding. He wants nothing of a god, but eternity and a heaven to throne in.

Sic. Yes, mercy, if you report him truly.

Men. I paint him in the character. Mark what mercy his mother shall bring from him: there is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger; that shall our poor city find; and all this is, long of you.

Thus he paints the characters of Coriolanus and the gods; and Shakspere, whilst he thus represents them distinctly, points out the attribute of mercy wanting in them and existing in the man. Was not the mockery of religion

partly the purpose of this play, its judgments and punishments, and its want of pity and benevolence? Pardon to the Romans is granted by the man, but none is provided for Coriolanus, who falls a sacrifice to his forgiveness of injuries, the triumph of love over hate.

Volumnia says he has 'affected'—

> To imitate the graces of the gods

in his fury and revenge. She opposes to it the true nobility of man, forgiveness of injuries:—

> Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man
> Still to remember wrongs?

Coriolanus's answer gives us an instance of Shakspere's old idea, that were there a Providence, mortal miseries would constitute divine pleasures, introduced contrary to the authority of history.

> *Cor.* O, mother, mother!——
> [*Holds her by the hands, silent.*
> What have you done? *behold the heavens do ope,*
> *The gods look down, and this unnatural scene*
> *They laugh at.* O, my mother, mother! O!
> You have won a happy victory to Rome;
> But for your son—believe it, O, believe it—
> Most dang'rously you have with him prevail'd,
> If not most mortal to him. But let it come.——

The lines italicised are Shakspere's. Mrs. Griffiths, in her morality of Shakspere, says, 'The expressions in the first part of this latter speech, with the prophetical conclusion of it, are taken almost literally from Plutarch, in his life of Coriolanus. We find, accordingly, in vol. ii., p. 199 of Langhorne's translation, "When she had said this, she threw herself at his feet, together with his wife and children: upon which Coriolanus, crying out 'O, mother, what is it you have done?' raised her from the ground, and tenderly pressing her hand, continued 'you have gained a victory fortunate for your country, but ruinous to me. I go, vanquished by you alone.'"'

Coriolanus seems naturally to have suggested Timon, which succeeds in the order of plays. The character of one naturally proud and revengeful is made to give way to the

instinct of humanity. Timon, all love and no hate, in consequence of the ingratitude of men, dies in unconquerable aversion to his species. But Timon seems to have had no family, has none of those strong affections, which, receiving and giving the milk of human kindness, are superior to friendships; and, awakened in the worst of characters, make a complete or momentary return to virtue. Shakspere makes nothing equal to this feeling, except, perhaps, the love of the sex, which, together with religion, of which he makes a still less cause, he considers as lunacy; and under its control a man as not the least master of his own actions, or even his own imagination.

TIMON OF ATHENS.

The belief of Timon appears to be in matter, and to go no further. His invocations to nature, its abstract powers and apparent operations, are most material. His mention of Providence seems spoken in irony—he ridicules and despises the gods as he does mankind. His want of faith in any controlling spirit of the universe, it will be seen, extends to the soul of man. Religion is generally satirised in this play.

Timon's materialism is manifested in his speech on the senators:—

> These old fellows
> Have their ingratitude in them hereditary;
> Their blood is cak'd, 'tis cold, it seldom flows;
> 'Tis lack of kindly warmth they are not kind;
> And nature, as it grows again tow'rd earth,
> Is fashion'd for the journey, dull and heavy.

A strange sentiment is expressed on the refusal of Timon's friends to assist him.

Flaminius, one of Timon's servants, is sent to demand money, and meeting with a refusal from Lucullus, Flaminius hopes that the meat in him, paid for by his master, may be the cause of every physical evil to him, on which Steevens remarks that the idea is that the nutriment which Lucullus had, for a length of time, received at Timon's table, was a great part of his animal system. Shakspere uses it in the speech of the Duke in Measure for Measure, and makes it an argument for materialism.

Shakspere drags in a severe reflection on religion. Warburton says, it is intended for the pious of his own times, and is addressed by Timon's servant to one of the monsters who pretended honourable motives in refusing to assist his master. Shakspere would appear to say that religion, instead of preventing, was an apology for wrong.

Serv. Excellent! Your lordship's a goodly villain. The devil knew not what he did when he made man politic; he crossed himself by it.

Meaning, we suppose, that man would do wrong and take all the benefit of religion, which appears the more from the following, in which he goes on to say:—

And I cannot think, but, in the end, the villanies of man will set him clear.

What can this mean but that they will be put to the account of religion, and straightforward vice will become virtue, and the powers of darkness take the place of the ministers of light?

How fairly this lord strives to appear foul! takes virtuous copies to be wicked; like those, that, under hot ardent zeal, would set whole realms on fire.

Here Shakspere makes his meaning unmistakable. He compares what he has said to religion; and of such a nature, he says, is the love of these lords. Shakspere insinuates that they would rather serve Satan than God; that the love that religion inspires is not only not equal to the love felt in the natural man, but is productive of wholesale evils subversive of the existence of society.

The Athenian senate adjudge a friend of Alcibiades to death for having killed another in a quarrel. In consequence of the remonstrances of Alcibiades against his execution, Alcibiades is condemned to be banished, and the consequence is that he turns his troops against Athens. Now the motive appears to us one extraneous to the play, and introduced to discuss the question whether it was fit patiently to suffer injuries or to resent them. Shakspere appears to have had in mind the precepts of Christianity with regard to suffering injuries; and his own sentiments seem here on the side of resenting them, since to them he gives the weight of argument, and by the catastrophe of the play shows that he approved them. Alcibiades appeals to the mercy of the senate, using those human arguments in favour of it noticed in Portia, Tamora, and Isabella. He does not use any divine reasons to recommend mercy, on the contrary, his only allusion to the gods is to produce their authority in

favour of revenge. The incidental remarks of Alcibiades are otherwise material. He speaks of the act of his friend as a thing necessitated, and of events as material and not providential.

> *Alcib.* It pleases, time and fortune, to lie heavy
> Upon a friend of mine.

The gods have not visited him with affliction, or punished him by the consequences of his passions. Alcibiades says of his friend :—

> He is a man, setting his fate aside,
> Of comely virtues.

Crime is to be imputed to fate, or necessitated, whilst the man remains virtuous in acts where he was uninfluenced by circumstances to commit a wrong. Could a man more completely expound the law of necessity? When Alcibiades would recommend revenge to the death, and the senate forgiveness of injuries, a senator says :—

> He's truly valiant that can wisely suffer
> The worst that man can breathe, and make his wrongs
> His outsides; to wear them like his raiment, carelessly.

Alcibiades argues thus against the practice and its consequences:—

> 1*st. Sen.* You cannot make gross sins look clear;
> It is not valour to revenge, but to bear.
> *Alcib.* My lords, then, under favour, pardon me,
> If I speak like a captain.
> Why do fond men expose themselves to battle,
> And not endure all threats? sleep upon't,
> And let the foes quietly cut their throats,
> Without repugnancy? If there be
> Such valour in the bearing, what make we
> Abroad? why then, women are more valiant,
> That stay at home, if bearing carry it;
> The ass, more captain than the lion; and the fellow,
> Loaden with irons, wiser than the judge;
> If wisdom be in suffering.

First he notices the injuries of words, and then the injuries of things, and that one offence unchecked, another would follow of worse effect. Is not all this directed against the maxim of Jesus, that struck on one cheek, you should present

the other? Alcibiades continues in the same strain and with the same application to the words of Jesus. This last argument seems to have much wrapt up in it, perhaps more than Shakspere wished immediately to be seen. It must have struck some as implying that to fulfil, to the letter, the injunctions of Jesus, was to forfeit the ends of justice.

The latter part of this play seems introduced on purpose to show the inefficacy of Christian morality upon men—not only by giving argument to opinion, but by the example of those who erred and were punished. The senate held the principles of Christian forgiveness analogous to those delivered in the Sermon on the Mount.

In the prosperity of Timon, Apemantus, the philosopher, is made to deliver a cynical prayer at the feast of Timon.

On the occasion of his last feast, the grace which Timon observes is as much in irony of the gods as of his pretended friends. He says:—

> The gods require our thanks;

knowing that his guests would not think so when they found nothing but warm water under the covers. It was a satire upon them to thank them for what he did not consider a benefit, and when he was going to ask for curses and not for blessings. Therefore, when he begins his prayer—

> You great benefactors! sprinkle our society with thankfulness;

he did not think them so worthy of the epithet and inspiring the effect.

He tells them, which is clear ridicule, to reserve enough of their gifts, for 'if they have not to give they will be despised,' and 'if their godheads were to borrow of men, men would forsake the gods.' They are to make villains of all men and women. Villains are their fees, he would insinuate, as he had said before—the devil got the better men.

After particularising them more individually, he puts all together:—

> The rest of your fees, O gods,—the senators of Athens, together with the common lag of people,—what is amiss in them, you gods, make suitable for destruction.

What is good they are to correct into bad, and their business

is in making people suitable for destruction. 'In nothing,' he says, 'bless them,' and 'to nothing they are welcome.' We will not say that this last sentence gives materialism as the conclusion to this theology, it may be taken so, as well as the nothing to which his friends were welcome in the warm water; but we will say that both in the manner and the matter of such a prayer and thanksgiving to the Deity, we never read anything more impious. We shall see he often reverts to the idea that interest makes religion, and without a profit from it there would be none.

In the corrected editions, 'fault' has been put for fate in a former speech of Alcibiades; and in this prayer, 'foes' have been substituted for fees, showing that some commentators thought them open to the accusation of irreligion.

When Timon, outside the wall, addresses his speech to Athens, which, too, is in the form of a prayer, we think it was in imitation of what Jesus said, looking on Jerusalem, and foretelling what would happen from its rejection of him.

> *Tim.* Let me look back upon thee, O thou wall,
> That girdles in those wolves!

A name which Jesus gave to the Jews. What Jesus said will happen, Timon conveys in a wish; and more than what Jesus said or Paul uttered of coming vices, is imprecated by Timon against Athens.

In calling them 'good,' when making such a request to the gods, Shakspere must have meant a satire upon them, either as not believing in the interposition of heaven, or insinuating that, according to common belief, its interference was more productive of evil than good.

The gods are good, as elsewhere God is kind, when invoked for the purposes of revenge.

In the woods, Timon's opening soliloquy is full of materialism, and he only mentions spiritualism to speak of it with contempt, as one of the most abhorrent features in his hatred of mankind.

> *Tim.* O blessed, breeding sun, draw from the earth
> Rotten humidity; below thy sister's orb
> Infect the air.

This is the language of Hamlet towards the sun as chiefly

operant in nature; but Timon addresses it as a power of matter operating on the moral as well as the physical nature of man.

Tim. Twinn'd brothers of one womb,
Whose procreation, residence, and birth,
Scarce is dividant—touch them with several fortunes.

This is the only Providence he knows of acting on the world. He asks the earth to yield him roots, turns up gold, and then, with a leer, he speaks of religion:—

What is here?
Gold? yellow, glittering, precious gold? No gods,
I am no idle votarist. Roots, you clear heavens!

Insinuating that those only prayed who wanted gold, or if they prayed for anything else, they did not want what they asked for, not even daily bread.

Breaking into a laugh, he says:—

Ha, you gods! why this? What this, you gods? Why this
Will lug your priests and servants from your sides;
Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads:
This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions; bless the accurs'd;
Make the hoar leprosy ador'd.

What language to be addressed to heaven! Alcibiades and his army present themselves:—

Alcib. What art thou there?
Speak.
Tim. A beast, as thou art.

He then says to Alcibiades:—

I know thee too; and more than that I know thee,
I not desire to know. Follow thy drum;
With man's blood paint the ground. Gules! gules!
Religious canons, civil laws are cruel;
Then what should war be?

Timon breaks forth into a sublime exhortation to Alcibiades to act as a god. He first mentions Jove, but Shakspere's ideas seem immediately drawn to those Scripture admonitions to God's people, which are sometimes to be met with when they are told to execute the vengeance of the Lord on the inhabitants of Canaan.

Tim. Be as a planetary plague, when Jove
Will o'er some high-vic'd city hang his poison
In the sick air: Let not thy sword skip one
Pity not honour'd age for his white beard,
He's an usurer: Strike me the counterfeit matron;
It is her habit only that is honest,
Herself's a bawd: Let not the virgin's cheek
Make soft thy trenchant sword; for those milk-paps,
That through the window-bars bore at men's eyes,
Are not within the leaf of pity writ,
But set them down horrible traitors: Spare not the babe,
Whose dimpled smiles from fools exhaust their mercy;
Think it a bastard, whom the oracle
Hath doubtfully pronounc'd thy throat shall cut,
And mince it sans remorse: Swear against objects;
Put armour on thine ears, and on thine eyes;
Whose proof, nor yells of mothers, maids, nor babes,
Nor sight of priests in holy vestments bleeding,
Shall pierce a jot. There's gold to pay thy soldiers:
Make large confusion; and, thy fury spent,
Confounded be thyself! Speak not, be gone.

Warburton says the bosoms of women exhibited is an allusion to the fashion of Shakspere's times, which shows how Shakspere, in describing generals, was drawn into the narrower current of particulars. And when he says they are not within the leaf of pity writ, we see him following the impression of his ideas, and referring to the book whence he had read this account of divine vengeance to the exclusion of pity. But the mention of traitors, and then of babes, seems to have produced in his mind the very natural transition from the Old to the New Testament, and the slaughter of the innocents. We have endeavoured to show elsewhere that Shakspere had many of the particulars of the nativity in his mind, and this instance will assist to prove the others. We have also given the literal mention of Herod doing homage to a child, with a very particular insight into the theological facts of the case; therefore, it is not at all improbable that he should recur to such a well known fact as the slaughter of the innocents, when speaking of the murder of babes, though he could not, without anachronism, allude by name to such a recorded fact. As we have said before, we cannot see why Shakspere should have introduced such dialogues, except for private purposes—not necessary to the play or the speech.

Here departing from generals, he gives an exceptional case for killing an infant, and for what possible reason except to allude to a well known fact? We see he is said by his critics to have done it just before, when it is not so coincident in the idea of a virgin's bosom—'boring, as it were, through the bars.'

Now it is known to everybody, that according to the Bible relation Herod had a fear that Jesus was the Messiah who would dethrone him, as David did Saul, and that in consequence of that fear he slaughtered the innocents without remorse, and fulfilled a prophecy that spoke of mothers lamenting for their children. Shakspere puts it in as an oracle doubtfully pronounced, that Herod did not understand the true meaning of the Messiah coming any more than the rest of the Jews. But why should Shakspere say 'bastard?' Legitimate or illegitimnte might just as well fulfil a prophecy, except that he had imbibed the vulgar idea of the Jews and anti-christians respecting Jesus. The coincidence of the rest convicts him of starting the idea, and we think the supposition as to the origin of the idea of 'the star twinkling on my bastardising' will appear from this of Timon's, not so far-fetched. It cannot be said here that Shakspere adapted his language to situation and character. Timon had nothing to do with Christianity—and the abuse of it, if proved, must belong entirely to Shakspere.

He says to the two courtezans who accompany Alcibiades:—

> You are not oathable,
> Although, I know, you'll swear, terribly swear,
> Into strong shudders, and to heavenly agues,
> The immortal gods that hear you—spare your oaths.
> I'll trust to your conditions. Be whores still;
> And he whose pious breath seeks to convert you
> Be strong in whore, allure him, burn him up;
> Let your close fire predominate his smoke,
> And be no turncoats.

He spoke to people who might acknowledge the gods, though they do not appear to have had any sentiment of religion; he therefore asks Alcibiades to give the performance to his imprecations, whilst he vents them upon him. Alcibiades says he will take his gold but not his counsel. To the women he

says, though he has enough gold to make them virtuous, yet he will rely more upon their 'conditions' than religion. He will not ask them to take oaths to fulfil his intentions towards mankind, but sneers at oaths, and endeavours to make the gods ridiculous under the idea of their hearing blasphemy. Still more does he ridicule the religious who would endeavour to cure crime by piety; he insinuates they are more liable to fall themselves than to effect conversion; and nature he calls fire, religion smoke. Nor does he let the priests alone, but quickly returns to the charge, when the women ask him what they shall do to deserve his gold.

> *Tim.* Hear the flamen,
> That scolds against the quality of flesh,
> And not believes himself;

i.e., talks against nature, and of God, and is an infidel himself. An opinion prevalent amongst disbelievers. The imprecations of Timon, their variety and repetition, are enough to make a man, not so firm in his faith as Johnson, shudder, and the imagination alone of an unbeliever could supply a character with the expression of such sentiments.

Timon in his soliloquies takes his fill of materialism, and thus addresses nature:—

> That nature, being sick of man's unkindness,
> Should yet be hungry!—Common mother, thou, [*Digging.*
> Whose womb unmeasurable, and infinite breast,
> Teems, and feeds all; whose selfsame mettle,
> Whereof thy proud child, arrogant man, is puff'd,
> Engenders the black toad, and adder blue,
> The gilded newt, and eyeless venom'd worm,
> With all the abhorred births below crisp heaven
> Whereon Hyperion's quickening fire doth shine;
> Yield him, who all thy human sons doth hate,
> From forth thy plenteous bosom one poor root!
> Ensear thy fertile and conceptious womb,
> Let it no more bring out ingrateful man!
> Go great with tigers, dragons, wolves, and bears;
> Teem with new monsters, whom thy upward face
> Hath to the marbled mansion all above
> Never presented!—O, a root—Dear thanks!
> Dry up thy marrows, vines, and plough-torn leas;
> Whereof ingrateful man, with liquorish draughts,
> And morsels unctuous, greases his pure mind,
> That from it all consideration slips!

Could anything be written more material, which might grace the title-page of the 'System of Nature?' or be a motto to the more scientific 'Natural History of the Creation?' Not an allusion to a maker, creator, or god, except to insult the idea of Providence, and make earth self-originating and creating, to the astonishment of the heavens.

All the terms applied to God are here given to matter—as our common parent, unmeasurable in its womb to produce, and infinite in its resources to feed. Shakspere is very fond of mentioning the pride of man, and contrasting it with all the material considerations which level him with the rest of nature. When he does this, it is without any mention of spiritualism, and often is introduced to give argument to opinion against the idea of his being immortal, or there being any hereafter. How completely Shakspere entered into the idea of man's being born under the influence of circumstances as well as educated by them, and not under sin or spiritual action, may be seen here and elsewhere. Timon says to Apemantus:—

> Thou art a slave, whom fortune's tender arm
> With favour never clasp'd, but bred a dog.
>
> Thy nature did commence in suff'rance, time
> Hath made thee hard in't.
> If thou wilt curse, thy father that poor rag
> Must be thy subject, who in spite put stuff
> To some she-beggar, and compounded thee
> Poor rogue hereditary.

He had been before expounding at length the difference between himself and the cynic, how his hatred to mankind was derived under totally different circumstances to that which had necessitated the behaviour of the pretended philosopher. On Apemantus expressing a wish that the world were rid of the men, that none but beasts remained, and he were one of them, Timon shows animal life to be worse than human, and gives it as the only reason we should be content with our condition. If Shakspere were at all religious, believed at all in the spirit of man being superior to the beasts, here was a noble opportunity to show that there was something in man, and a hope of immortality, which set him above the beasts, and made vile indeed the sentiment of Ape-

mantus, which lost sight of the peculiar privileges of man, his right to eternity, and his being made after the image of God.

Left to himself again Timon returns to his abuse of religion on seeing the gold. As usual, Shakspere repeating the ideas which it had before suggested :—

> Thou visible God,
> That sold'rest close impossibilities,
> And mak'st them kiss? that speak'st with every tongue,
> To every purpose! Oh, thou touch of hearts!
> Think thy slave man rebels; and by thy virtue
> Set them into confounding odds, that beasts
> May have the world in empire.

Shakspere, in pointed language, ascribes to this personification of Deity more attributes than he ever gave to divine power reverenced by mankind. It is curious that the atheist Marechal addresses gold much in the same words, in his poem called the French Lucretius.

Timon, in his speech to the thieves, in his satire upon professions, (and Shakspere was a Molière, including all in his reproaches) puts the priests first:—

> Yet thanks I must you con,
> That you are thieves profess'd, that you work not
> In holier shapes: for there is boundless theft
> In limited professions.

This examination of men he soon quits to illustrate the operations of nature, formed on the abstraction of one part from another, on destruction as well as creation, on decay and revival. He shows the harmony of the universe, which takes and supplies, and continues in its eternal round of material interchanges. After mentioning the sun, the moon, and the sea, he comes to the most material conclusion with regard to the earth and its productions, and, as usual, the most degrading to mankind.

> *Tim.* The earth's a thief,
> That feeds and breeds by a composture stol'n
> From gen'ral excrements.

Shelley has the same idea, but not expressed in such contemptuous and bitter terms.

Shakspere does here append a moral: he makes the thieves say they are almost charmed from their profession by Timon's persuasion to it, which would seem to mean that vice in itself carries its own cure, that society cannot and will not go on with it, and that when its effects are shown by proper education, and put in a proper light, it will not be committed. There is no love for it, but men are driven to it by circumstances and necessity. The soliloquy of the Steward, on beholding his ruined master, introduces a Scriptural principle, which Shakspere has already objected to in this play, and which he seems to do on this and other occasions:—

> How rarely does it meet with this time's guise,
> When man was wish'd to love his enemies?

One of the moral objects of this play, as we have said before, seems to have been, to point out the impossibility of practising the Christian virtues; and above, Shakspere puts it in a sentence that would serve as a motto to his play.

> *Tim.* Had I a steward
> So true, so just, and now so comfortable?
> It almost turns my dangerous nature wild.

Then, as it were, reverting to a Providence, not on account of its administration of justice, but because there was one honest man. He says:—

> Forgive my general and exceptless rashness,
> Perpetual-sober Gods! I do proclaim
> One honest man. Mistake me not. But one;
> No more, I pray; and he's a steward.

As if in irony of their indifference according to the Epicurean idea.

The speeches in this part of the play abound in Scriptural allusions of the same tendency as those exhibited; but enough has been cited to establish our general positions.

When Timon sees the poet and the painter come to seek his gold, he says:—

> I'll meet you at the turn.
> What a God's gold, that he is worshipped
> In a baser temple than where swine do feed!
> 'Tis thou that rigg'st the bark, and plough'st the foam;
> Settlest admired reverence in a slave.

> To thee be worship! and thy saints for aye
> Be crown'd with plagues, that thee alone obey!

This not only appears a satire on gold, but on God, worship, and the reverence of helpless beings which originates religion. The introduction of saints, crowned with plagues, shows that more than mere abstract superstition, or the passions of men, were in his thoughts.

On the entrance of the senators, Timon says, after wishing them every evil—

> So I leave you
> To the protection of the prosp'rous gods,
> As thieves to keepers.

Thus he compares the gods to gaolers of a prison. He tells them of his death, which is to be to-morrow, and speaks of it as annihilation.

> *Tim.* Why, I was writing of my epitaph;
> It will be seen to-morrow. My long sickness
> Of health and living now begins to mend,
> And nothing brings me all things.

He then, in recommending death to the Athenians, speaks of it as Hamlet does in his soliloquy, and as do so many others of Shakspere's characters, as the end of all things:—

> Commend me to them,
> And tell them, that to ease them of their grief,
> Their fears of hostile strokes, their aches, losses,
> Their pangs of love, with other incident throes,
> That nature's fragile vessel doth sustain
> In life's uncertain voyage, I will do
> Some kindness to them, I'll teach them to prevent
> Wild Alcibiades' wrath.
> Whoso please
> To stop affliction, let him take his haste;
> Come hither ere my tree hath felt the axe,
> And hang himself.

Alcibiades had also spoken in eulogy of suicide. Timon concludes as to himself, in the same language, and points to the result he would impress on others. Of religion and immortality, and of the mansions of the blessed, he thus materialises:—

Come not to me again; but say to Athens
Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
Upon the beached verge of the salt flood,
Which once a-day with his embossed froth
The turbulent surge shall cover. Thither come,
And let my grave-stone be your oracle.
Lips, let sour words go by, and language end:
What is amiss, plague and infection mend!
Graves only be men's works, and death their gain!
Sun, hide thy beams! Timon hath done his reign.

All that he could he had done in the way of lips and language—he had ended his reign, and he invoked one of the powers of creation to be his successor, that destruction might commence in deed as well as speech. A senator says to Alcibiades, in mitigation of punishment:—

All have not offended:
For those that were, it is not square to take
On those that are, revenge. Crimes, like to lands,
Are not inherited.

The allusion here is one evidently pointed against the doctrine of original sin.

The epitaph on Timon is an appropriate and striking commentary on his fate and opinions:—

Here lies a wretched corse, of wretched soul bereft.

WINTER'S TALE.

How love may be turned into hatred, kindness into cruelty, from natural causes; how wonders, moral and material, may be produced by realities, seem the objects of this play.

Hermione says to Polixenes:—

> You'll stay?
> *Pol.* No, Madam.
> *Her.* Nay, but you will?
> *Pol.* I may not, verily.
> *Her.* Verily?
> You put me off with limber vows; but I,
> Tho' you would seek to unsphere the stars with oaths,
> Should yet say, 'Sir, no going:' verily,
> You shall not go: a lady's verily is
> As potent as a lord's. Will you go yet?
> Force me to keep you as a prisoner,
> Not like a guest; so you shall pay your fees
> When you depart, and save your thanks. How say you?
> My prisoner, or my guest? by your dread verily,
> One of them you shall be.

We cannot help thinking that this is intended as a more covert instance, of which Shakspere openly gave an example by quotation in Richard II., 'of setting the word itself against the word.' It will be recollected by those conversant with the Scriptures that verily was the favourite asseveration of Jesus. Now Shakspere calls these verilies limber vows, and puts them in comparison with other oaths. The divine master had said, 'verily I say unto you,' when he had told them to swear not at all, and their conversation was to be yea and nay. 'Nay' is the negative, first used by Hermione, and seems the introduction in Shakspere's mind to 'verily,' and his subsequent reflections upon the word. Shakspere, by calling those verilies vows and oaths, would say that the very time we were forbidden to swear, there was a contra-

diction in the divine master swearing, and that he was no example of his precepts in the Sermon on the Mount. Shakspere not only had given an example of thoughts, of things divine, intermixed with scruples of the word set against the word, but, in Measure for Measure, that the thoughts and imaginations of the divine instructor were themselves lawless and uncertain. And here he leaves the same thing to be inferred of his sayings with regard to morality and every-day life. Verily was more than yea and nay, as Shakspere says; it meant by the truth; and by saying a lady's verily is as potent as a lord's, he would declare one oath as good as another—the same in the mouth of a master or disciple. Finally, Hermione, who began with a nay, changes it for verily, swears by the oath of Polixenes, and calls it the dread verily—as it were in derision of the source whence it came. What use, we ask, expatiating on such a word, had there not been the extraneous consideration we have mentioned—the intention so palpably displayed of trying to make it out an oath, and giving occasion to mock it as a word of sacred respect? What purport, therefore, but to gird the gods, whom Shakspere could not spare in the founder of Christianity? The only thing to be said in extenuation might be, that the Puritans had adopted the word, so that by satirising them he might avoid the imputation of mocking the original. But if meant to apply to them, the argument in it is as much directed against the use of the word in the Scriptures as against the Puritans' employment of it; and this could not have escaped the penetration of Shakspere, if it did of any of his hearers or readers.

That Shakspere was occupied with spiritual thoughts is almost immediately seen by his introduction, contrary to character, of the doctrine of original sin. He makes the pagan Polixenes say that if he and Leontes had continued the same as they were in childhood—

> We should have answer'd Heaven
> Boldly, 'Not guilty;' th' imposition clear'd,
> Hereditary ours.

The allusions to religion, and the doctrines of the times, are continued, though the *dramatis personæ* are all heathens.

When Leontes talks of the proofs, to him, of his wife's infidelity, he says:—

> Is this nothing?
> Why, then the world, and all that's in't, is nothing;
> The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing;
> My wife is nothing; nor nothing have these nothings,
> If this be nothing.

An illustration of 'Nihil ex nihilo fit,' the contrary of which is pronounced as the highest impossibility.

Religious belief in the oracle, Leontes says, shall give rest to the minds of others; will make that to be true to him which was not so before; such is he whose ignorant credulity will not come up to the truth. Paulina says nature made the child, his new-born daughter; and if it has the ordering of the mind, she tells it not to make her jealous as her father, to believe impossibilities.

> *Leon.* I'll have thee burnt.
> *Paul.* I care not;
> It is an heretic that makes the fire,
> Not she that burns in't.

Persecutors, not their victims, are the heretics holding false opinions. Hermione, in her defence, says:—

> If pow'rs divine
> Behold our human actions, as they do,

they will make known her innocence. The doubt expressed is qualified by a parenthetical assertion of the belief in Providence. We have before noticed this in Shakspere, as rather evidencing, by the apology, his scepticism, than making us believe he had no doubts on the question. It was here, however, necessary to character and situation. Of the absence of Camillo from court, she says:—

> And why he left your court, the gods themselves
> Wotting no more than I are ignorant.

The oracle against him, Leontes, immediately denies its authority, but his child dead, and his wife's death reported, he admits his profaneness. Paulina says the queen is dead, knowing her to be alive. The most extravagant repentance of numbers after Roman Catholic fashion would not move the gods, she says, to look the way he went.

Antigonus says, thinking to have seen in his sleep Hermione, who is not dead:—

> Come, poor babe; I have heard,
> But not believ'd, the spirits of the dead
> May walk again; if such thing be, thy mother
> Appear'd to me last night; for ne'er was dream
> So like a waking.
> Dreams are toys,
> Yet for this once, yea, superstitiously,
> I will be squar'd by this.

Shepherd says to his son, on finding the babe:—

> If thou'lt see a thing to talk on when thou art dead and rotten, come hither.

The Clown, his son, speaks of the ship going down, with the pity of Miranda in the Tempest. The Shepherd says to his son, because he has found gold with the child:—

> 'Tis a lucky day, and we will do good deeds on it.

He is suddenly inspired with the morality of Paley—he is rich enough to be good.

Autolycus is a sort of variation of the character of Barnardine, whose villany is less from having less resolution, but caring for life, he has the philosophy of Measure for Measure in not caring for a future state, which he expresses somewhat after the fashion of the Clown to Barnardine in that play:—

> Gallows, and knock, are too powerful on the highway: beating and hanging are terrors to me; for the life to come, I sleep out the thought of it.

What need had Shakspere to repeat this infidelity—religion *versus* morality—whenever he could introduce it? However, as the rewards in this world, according to the Shepherd, were to make people good, so punishments, in some degree, were to effect their purpose, and deter from crime: acting on Mackintosh's principle of virtue—the love of life. It is doubtful whether criminals are prevented by the fear of a future state, which Mackintosh says would be a gallows-morality, if they believed in it. Shakspere makes them think that as a sleep here effaces the thought, so an eternal sleep will the fact of the life to come.

The Clown, reciting the preparations for the feast, says of the Musicians:—

> But one Puritan amongst them, and he sings psalms to horn-pipes.

This a variation of a joke we have had before on the Puritans—the sacred borrowing from the profane. We cannot see, in this mention of the psalms, any reverence to Scripture, or the profession of piety in his rivals who would draw the Globe from mundane to more heavenly pursuits.

Autolycus likens a man's career of vices to the scenes in the life of the prodigal son.

When Perdita speaks of the resolution of Florizel, and the opposition of his father, the king, to his marriage with her, the will within and the cause without, Shakspere, in two lines and a half, has delivered the whole essay of Hume on liberty and necessity—that of two, or many motives, but one can act, which becomes necessity.

> *Per.* One of these two must be necessities,
> Which then will speak, that you must change this purpose,
> Or I my life.

He says he can be nothing but hers:—

> To this I am most constant,
> Tho' destiny say no.

Perdita says to Polixenes, the king, in disguise, that she has not some flowers in her nosegay because of their supposed improper effects on the chastity of maidens. Polixenes makes a long artificial, metaphysical, philosophical speech, the purport of which is that nothing can be separated from nature, nature makes all—makes art: that nature makes that which appears to be assisting nature: that nature changed, still nature does it.

Florizel says to Perdita, on the supposition of his violation of faith:—

> It cannot fail, but by
> The violation of my faith; and then
> Let nature crush the sides o' th' earth together,
> And mar the seeds within.

Should love, in the vehemence of passion, talk speculative

philosophy? Was not this so-often-repeated Lucretian sentiment concerning the nature of things delivered in character by Shakspere?

Florizel is one of those sons who is made to look forward to his father's death, even in his hearing, as the accomplishment of his prospects and promises to Perdita. The young man has no great regard for truth, nor has his counsellor, Camillo, though his dissembling and falsehood lead to a happy issue and the fulfilment of the oracle. When Camillo says if they will obey his direction they may live together married, Florizel asks if he can perform a miracle—can he trust in Camillo any longer as a man? The law of necessity having been laid down by Perdita, the doctrine of chance is as philosophically delivered by Florizel, when Camillo asks him whether he has thought of any place to go to.

> *Flo.* Not any yet;
> But as th' unthought-on accident is guilty
> Of what we wildly do, so we profess
> Ourselves to be the slaves of chance, and flies
> Of every wind that blows.

Autolycus, in his soliloquy on rogues, does not let the young prince pass, but characterises him as 'about a piece of iniquity.'

> *Aut.* Sure the gods do this year connive at us, and we may do anything extempore.

Was this word used in mockery of the Puritans, and their assuming the sanction of religion for their misdeeds? Autolycus having made the Shepherd and his son the victims of his roguery, and still intending to make them serve his purpose, the Clown says:—

> We are blessed in this man, as I may say, even blessed.
> *Shep.* Let's before, as he bids us: he was provided to do us good.

Here is a sneer at Providence, and the expression of good people towards the instruments of good to them.

The Gentleman, announcing to the court of Leontes the arrival of Perdita with Florizel, says:—

> This is a creature,
> Would she begin a sect, might quench the zeal

> Of all professors else, make proselytes
> Of who she but bid follow.
> *Paul.* How? not women?

Whilst this expressed the easiness of making a religion, it shows no reverence to the true one, or its professors: and whilst the man assigns to a woman all followers, the woman implies, by her answer, that whilst the other sex would follow a woman, her sex would do no such thing, but rather give their faith to a man.

A Gentleman of the court says the statue, supposed to be of Hermione, is a work—

> Newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano; who, had he himself eternity, and could put breath into his work, would beguile nature of her custom, so perfectly is he her ape.

This is like many other passages of Shakspere on the formation of man: to be nature eternity is wanted, as well as the gift of infusing the breath of life. That eternity is here meant as the attribute of divinity, or, as he calls it, nature, is plain from the preceding play, where Menenius says Coriolanus 'wants nothing of a god but eternity.' Johnson has a long note to explain that eternity, in this passage of the Winter's Tale, only means the temporal sense by which we express a long continuation of time. That would be to except it from its contexts, when it is coupled with the other attributes—the gift of divinity, breath of life, and nature, which is eternal, and of which he speaks. From Johnson's attempt to apologise for it, and alter its construction, we can only infer that he did not approve of this passage, nor of the others which detract from religion by base and material comparisons, and mock the exercise of divinity.



TEMPEST.

THE Boatswain, in the storm, has no religion—neither reverence for God, or man, but a love of life, which he respects more in himself than others. He says you are to be thankful you have lived so long, and be ready for the mischance of death. Readiness is all, as Hamlet said, and Gloster in Lear.

The more pious old counsellor of Naples derives consolation from the idea that such a boatswain was rather fated to be hanged than drowned :—

> Stand fast, good fate, to his hanging! make the rope of his destiny our cable, for our own doth little advantage! if he be not born to be hanged, our case is miserable.

This appears to be rather an ill timed mockery of prayer. On the re-appearance of the royal party the Boatswain receives them no better, but asks what do they there? and Sebastian gives the character of him and his language, by which again we may know what is considered blasphemous and derogatory of men or gods :—

> A pox o'your throat! you bawling, blasphemous, incharitable dog!

The Boatswain tells them to work. And when the rest fly to prayers, deeming all lost, he says, what, must our mouths be cold? thinking of the different liquid and results when he should have to take in sea water instead of engulphing fiery spirits.

The moral of this appears to be that on such occasions it would be better to work and endeavour to save yourself than waste the time in prayers and lamentations, when a common fate must embrace all who expose themselves to it—the pious, the blasphemous, the good and the bad, the royal and the ignoble. Such has been the case in a wreck, when the only one saved has reported that whilst he stripped, com-

mitted himself to the waves, and the assistance of objects around him, the rest he left in supplication to heaven.

Mira. O! I have suffer'd
With those that I saw suffer.

This is a sentiment of morality coming from an unsophisticated child of nature. The love of humanity, which is at once awakened in the heart of one of the same species, though ignorant of her kind before. This love, or this pity, left to itself, or cherished, would not bear to do injury, or see it done.

Mira. O! the cry did knock
Against my very heart: poor souls, they perish'd!

The love of mankind and creatures of this earth, which she feels, she thinks ought to extend to heaven; and thus she passes judgment on the want of mercy in the higher powers, who permit shipwrecks and other mundane calamities.

Mira. Had I been any God of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth; or e'er
It should the good ship so have swallow'd, and
The fraughting souls within her.

Shakspere here does not spare to gird the gods, of whatever religion, for their want of mercy, which he represents, as he has done before, more an attribute of humanity. He puts it in comparison that higher powers, if there be such, are not so good as men; and he has often rated them for their cruelty. The inference to be drawn is, that as before, prayer or not prayer, piety or impiety, good or bad, were shown to be all alike before the causes of nature; so Shakspere, in Miranda, gives the conclusion that there was no interference of Providence, no instance of its exercise on earth. Enough we see in these introductory strokes, and from what we know of the end of the play, to suppose that Shakspere framed this drama on the moral of Measure for Measure, and other plays: a human system of love, mercy, and forgiveness here, greater in extent, than in any religious scheme, present, or to arrive hereafter.

Shakspere gives an instance in Prospero of mentioning, in the same breath, Providence and fortune.

Mira. How came we ashore?
Pro. By Providence divine.
Know thus far forth.
By accident most strange, bountiful fortune,
Now my dear lady, hath mine enemies
Brought to this shore; and, by my prescience
I find, my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious star; whose influence
If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes
Will ever after droop.

Thus Shakspere mixed at random causes with Providence or chance; sometimes revising one with the other, but adhering more to the one than the other, showing to which he inclined; sometimes affirming it and then denying it, which induces us to think that he sometimes introduced Providence in propriety with the times, whilst he adhered on the whole to nature. Here, as in Hamlet, Providence is assumed immediately to be negatived; we think this is as strong evidence of the direction of a man's mind, as if, from appearance, it was all on one side. It shows that he was aware of the other side of the question; of the religious belief in a Providence, that he held it up in deference to public opinion, and to be opposed by his own opinion. As to speaking in character, here is one declaring himself, as Hamlet did in opposition to himself; and of the two ideas, it must be asked, which of them belongs to the writer? If it be said that Shakspere only painted nature, as Shaftesbury has in his characteristics, declaring that men are visited with different and opposite ideas on the subjects of religion, then Shakspere drew men as infidels, where in poetry he might have made them uniform, showed that he had the same opinion of men as another infidel, and that he was of that opinion in which he most often declared himself—the test which Shaftesbury says is applicable to the discovery of a man's real private thoughts on questions of religion.

Prospero, having gone from Providence to accident, proceeds to account for things present and to come from his own knowledge, and a star which presides over his fortunes.

Caliban says to Stephano, he will show him where he may knock a nail into the head of Prospero sleeping. Why not have said where he might slay him, instead of mentioning

a particular sort of death to a man sleeping, which occurs in the Bible, in the story of Sisera? Such an allusion in the mouth of Caliban on the stage we do not think reverential. The case here was one of folly and wickedness; whilst in the Scriptures there were extenuating circumstances in the commission of the deed, the death of an enemy to one's country, which Prospero was not, although so thought of by the half man and half brute, Caliban. On the provocations of Ariel, Trinculo says :—

O, forgive me my sins.

Ste. He that dies pays all debts: I defy thee. Mercy upon us.

In this drunken party is a repetition of Cassio under the same circumstances, using the Lord's Prayer, with the joking response of Falstaff and denial of a future state. The conversation between these drunken associates is otherwise not very reverential in its allusions. Where you might expect to find it there is no mention of a future state; and in the dialogue between Antonio and Sebastian, there seems the conviction, whatever might happen on earth, there was no reckoning after death, and that the sleep of death, into which they propose to put Gonzalo and Alonzo, would be eternal and material. We shall find it fully developed by Prospero. Prospero enacts a scene of spirits to please his future son-in-law; when finished, Prospero turns what has been witnessed into argument and philosophy. Perhaps exception may be made physically to the extent which he allows to the wearing out of matter; but, both with regard to the universe, and particularly with regard to man, his conclusions as to their existence are most mortal and material.

Pro. You look, my son, in a mov'd sort,
As if you were dismay'd; be cheerful, sir:
Our revels now are ended: these our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind! we are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life

Is rounded with a sleep.——Sir, I am vexed;
Bear with my weakness, my old brain is troubled:
Be not disturb'd with my infirmity;
If thou be pleas'd, retire into my cell,
And there repose: a turn or two I'll walk,
To still my beating mind.

It will be observed that he speaks of thin air, matter yet, however attenuated. Whether does he mean by 'all which it inherit,' these things he has mentioned upon the earth, or in continuation of the idea, that what succeeds this globe will come to the same end, and leave not a rack behind? Nothing can be more conclusive of the end of all things, great and small. Perpetual change of matter is proclaimed—perpetual loss of identity, which is the case with ourselves: as those spirits vanished, so shall we disappear. There is nothing more immortal or eternal in us than in the rest of matter; what happens to them, in a shorter time, having a shorter life, must happen to us. As these illusions, so are our dreams, and as these dreams are rounded by a sleep, so are our lives. We slept and knew not before we came into the world, so we shall when we leave it, of such stuff as to identity and eternity are we made. As is a dream in a sleep, so is life in eternity. Of such 'stuff,' not a very ennobling term, are we made.

There is some interest attached to this speech, in the minds of those who think it the farewell play of Shakspere. Then there is a peculiar significance attached to these revels ended, actors, spirits, these dissolving views, the property of the globe, the globe itself—the name of Shakspere's theatre.

Johnson has remarked of Shakspere, 'It is impossible for any man to rid his mind of his profession.' This is, in fact, the third time that Shakspere has drawn the resemblance between actors and the lives of men, the stage and the world. In the mouth of Macbeth we have life a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more—a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing—instead of revels ended, and the actors' spirits, melting into thin air—the world, their stage, fading and leaving not a rack behind—their lives as dreams, rounded with a sleep. The Duke and Jaques using the

same words as in the speeches of Prospero and Macbeth—the world a theatre of pageants, divided into scenes. Yes, says Jaques, the world's a stage, men and women merely players, many parts to every individual, the last scene of life as the first, sans everything—nothing.

As a picture of life, more especially in its relation to death, without the illustration of the theatre, what more was the speech of the Duke in Measure for Measure? There the best of rest is sleep, and death is no more. There, too, he likened life to a dream, and thereby draws a distinction between the sleep of dreams and sleep without dreams. He says of the whole of life, youth and age, that it is, as it were, an after-dinner's sleep dreaming on both. What is this that bears the name of life? death makes all these odds even —no more, nothing.

What appeared to us so clear in itself, we should have thought it scarcely necessary to make clearer by comparing this speech with others on the same subject. It seems that others thought the same, that life rounded with a sleep meant terminated; but Mr. Knight, finding it affirmed, not by Johnson, but by his (Knight's) correspondents in this case, has taken upon himself, on the part of Shakspere, and as commentator, absolutely to deny this interpretation. 'We have been asked,' he says, 'the meaning of this passage, rounded with a sleep, it being supposed that rounded was used in the sense of terminated; and that one sleep was the end of life. This was not Shakspere's philosophy; nor would he have introduced an idea totally disconnected with the preceding description.' As Shakspere has a philosophy, it would have been but fair to us and Shakspere to have told us what it was, and superseded the necessity of this inquiry. It is at least agreeable to us, who have heard so much about character, and Shakspere not being a man, to find it admitted that there was any philosophy discoverable in his works.

The philosophy of Shakspere, we are told, is not the philosophy which Johnson has assigned to him on a similar passage, where it is elaborately drawn out, given twice, as the point and moral of the speech, the whole of life—being there analysed morally and materially to produce this conclusion twice repeated. There the whole weight of circumstances

go to prove it the philosophy of Shakspere: the character of the duke-priest, the character and sentiments of the patient Claudio to whom it is applied. The didactic nature of the lesson, the occasion and the person, the repetitions elsewhere of the same philosophy, all brought to an unmistakable focus in the Duke's speech, made Johnson, who entertained a very different philosophy, think it could not pass unobserved by the most casual reader, and must produce its impression. Johnson, therefore, in the character of a moralist and philosopher, denounced Shakspere. What he saw there, everybody, it seems, but Mr. Knight, saw, and regarded the words as having the same meaning as in Prospero.

We confess ourselves at a loss to see how the idea commonly affixed to the passage is totally disconnected with its preceding description. If introduced without propriety, it only the more shows the individual bias of Shakspere to turn everything to his own philosophy. But we do not see any disconnection in this speech, and find no disconnection in other speeches of a similar character. Mr. Knight, however, does, by mentioning Berkeley about dreams, wish to have it supposed that Shakspere had the same philosophy as the no-matter Bishop *His* intention was avowed—it was to support religion, and points of faith; but we have no such spiritualism in Shakspere—all indicates materialism. However, they say the Bishop himself repented of his theory. Hume said, his works on matter 'form the best lessons of scepticism which are to be found either among the ancient or modern philosophers, Bayle not excepted.' Dr. Beattie, also, considers them as having a sceptical tendency.—*Vide* Chalmers' Bio. Dict.

To us it appears, 'life rounded by a sleep' expresses exactly what Cicero said, and the poets of antiquity, that you returned in death to what you were before you were born: the beginning, middle, and end of existence, comprised in a circle of perpetual night. 'A mind firm and enlightened is without inquietude; it despises death, which places man back in the same state where he was before he was born.' —*Cicero de finibus.*

A French poet, Cyrano, had his tragedy of Aggrippina

interdicted for introducing Sejanus answering her inquiries whether he did not fear death, or the uncertainty where death might lead—'An hour after death our vanquished soul will be what it was before life.'

'Our revels ended,' express the pleasures of life ended as well as the pangs. Life rounded with a sleep seems well expressed by Seneca in consolations to a friend, though, for the same purpose as Shakspere has in speaking of death, he makes the consolation to consist, as Shakspere does generally, in its being the termination of our pains. 'Death finishes all our pains; beyond, there remains nothing to suffer: it restores us to that profound tranquillity in which we were softly extended before that we saw the day.'

Jean Jacques Rousseau, in a letter to Voltaire on his poem of Lisbon, says, 'The question of Providence belongs to that of the immortality of the soul, which I have the happiness of believing, without being ignorant that reason may doubt it.' Those have generally been considered atheists who have denied the immortality of the soul. Suidas, in his lexicon, vol. 1, p. 108, says 'Atheum est immortalitatem animæ non conservare.' That is to say, 'It is atheistical not to hold the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.'

After this natural philosophy of Shakspere's, we have a splendid example of his morality, in theory and practice, quite in conformity with similar sentiments and actions of his dramas. Ariel relates to Prospero the afflictions of the royal party wrecked on his island:—

> Your charm so strongly works them,
> That if you now beheld them, your affections
> Would become tender.
>
> *Pro.* Dost thou think so, spirit?
>
> *Ari.* Mine would, sir, were I human.
>
> *Pro.* And mine shall.
> Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
> Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
> One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,
> Passion as they, be kindlier mov'd than thou art?
> Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
> Yet, with my nobler reason, 'gainst my fury
> Do I take part; the rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance; they being penitent,

> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further; go, release them, Ariel;
> My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
> And they shall be themselves.
>
> *Ari.* I'll fetch them, sir.

The sight of evil, as we have said before, in a natural condition of humanity, is and would be a sufficient guarantee against the commission of injuries.

The consequences of one being like another, of whatever difference of opinion—of whatever different circumstances, which should result in mutual love, and which was so finely delivered by Shylock in the Merchant of Venice, are here repeated by Prospero. Reason properly exercised is a sufficient counterpoise to fury; the rarer, that is, the more excellent, action, is rather in the forgiveness of injuries than in taking vengeance. Punishment should go no further than producing repentance, into which men should be led, and should not be given as retaliation, or as precluding repentance and reform.

Here is the moral of the play, which we remarked in the beginning. Miranda has the sentiments of her father and Ariel, and she says if she had been a god of power she would have saved the crew. Prospero had acted on, and was proceeding to the practice of, these precepts of morality. Can we help, therefore, thinking that with so marked a reference to what a god ought to do, that Shakspere had in mind that neither man nor Providence should add to evil, but do all the good they could in this world, and that judgment in the next should exercise mercy and general pardon—that justice was not in eternal punishments, and should reach no further than repentance? These comparisons between a supposed god of power and man—the contrast between the feelings and practice of Miranda, Ariel, and Prospero—the introduction of spirits, and what they must be as well as man—the delivery of Prospero's prisoners to a momentary place of trivial torment, and their release from it at the intercession of a spirit agreeing with his own intentions—all seem to us strongly to mark intentions towards a system of divine and religious judgment, as well as human. We do not any the more admit that Shakspere believed in a future state; but

how common it is for infidels to argue in the strain of Shakspere—that from the attributes given to the Deity, particularly benevolence, he must excel in this virtue more than his creature—that he is not worse, as he is represented, but must be better and more merciful than man. We have before remarked that the purpose exhibited in this is more or less seen in other plays—was the sole drift of his purpose in Measure for Measure, where, villany frustrated, Justice did not extend a frown further, to the penitent or not penitent—but, having rewarded the good, it left the bad to become better. The injuries past of Alonzo and Sebastian, and the recent intended murderers, Antonio and Sebastian, are alike forgiven, and absolution made of their offences.

Gonzalo addresses the re-appearance of the Boatswain, who had not suffered at all:—

> Now, blasphemy,
> That swear'st grace o'erboard, not an oath on shore?
> Hast thou no mouth by land? what is the news?

It appears blasphemy was none the worse, had got rid only of the wicked out of his ship, and having said no prayers, expressed no thanksgiving for his deliverance, no repentance of his blasphemy, in reply to the question of the pious Gonzalo, merely says:—

> The best news is, that we have safely found
> Our King and company; the next, our ship,
> Which but three glasses since we gave out split,
> Is tight and yare, and bravely rigg'd, as when
> We first put out to sea.

There is no expression even of reverence for a miracle. Though Alonzo says—

> And there is in this business more than nature
> Was ever conduct of,

Caliban is pardoned, who is another Barnardine, though more a monster of fancy. Caliban being commanded to do his duty as servant, with his drunken associate, says:—

> Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter,
> And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
> Was I, to take this drunkard for a god?
> And worship this dull fool?

Barnardine did not answer the exhortation of the Duke to repentance; and we say the idea given to this half-and-half beast and human of turning to grace, is done in ridicule of religion, and is plainly expressed to produce that effect. There is the additional satire, or what may be called the philosophy of religion, as the Shaftesburys and Humes have it, that man makes his religion: according to what he is, so will he construct his divinity. An ass will have a fool for his god.

THE POEMS OF SHAKSPERE.

VENUS AND ADONIS.

Some who have denied that the opinions of Shakspere may be derived from his plays, admit that an inference may be drawn, as to his sentiments, from his poems, particularly his sonnets. Armitage Brown would infer a biography from them; but he, also, has recourse to the plays, as have all other writers who would speak of Shakspere's life, feelings, and opinions. Malone says of the sonnets, 'the general style of which, and numerous passages in them, remind us of our author's plays.' The most marked conformity between the poems and the plays exists on the subject of death, and material views of life. That there is no other existence but the present, seems the ruling idea of these pieces. Love and death are the principal points of interest in these poems. On death he is very full and direct; allusions to religion are scarce. Lust is painted rather than love, and the pen of Shakspere sometimes seems to indulge in the worse obscenity of double-meaning. The material view of the nature of things, without Providence and a future state, is of very general introduction.

Venus and Adonis Shakspere is supposed to have mentioned as his first composition, which would give evidence of early pruriency of imagination. He was compared to Ovid for it, who, Meres said, lived in the soul of Shakspere. Shakspere does not seem to have been averse to a philosophical or poetical interpretation of the transmigration of souls. The motive assigned for the appearance of Venus and Adonis, some time after it was written, is one which would denote a mind closed to the impressions of religion under the most favourable circumstances for its development. This poem is supposed to have been his earliest production,

and Collier says he was induced to prepare it for the press by the leisure afforded by a plague in London, which released him from the theatre. During a period of public calamity, a man of any religious tendency would surely have found a more serious and suitable occupation.

His only recognition of a future life appears to be that involved in the extension of our own existence in our offspring, which is also adduced as the chief motive for the enjoyment of our love.

> Upon the earth's increase why shouldst thou feed,
> Unless the earth with thy increase be fed?
> By law of nature thou art bound to breed,
> That thine may live when thou thyself art dead:
> And so, in spite of death, thou dost survive,
> In that thy likeness still is left alive.

i.e., the only life we have after death, is in the perpetuity of our species.

We may remark, by the way, from the sentiments introduced in this passage, that Shakspere's poems are as philosophical as his plays, and betray a common author. Those who, from religious motives, deny themselves the world, Venus is made to call—

> Love-lacking vestals and self-loving nuns.

In the next stanza she likens those not born, whom a man might have had, to those who are buried in their graves. The dead are the same as the unborn; there is a difference in those who have posterity, but there is no distinction made as to having an immortal soul.

> What is thy body but a swallowing grave,
> Seeming to bury that posterity
> Which, by the rights of time, thou needs must have
> Of them, destroy them not in dark obscurity?

In search of her love, the sight of the wounded and dying hounds gives Venus a presentiment of the death of Adonis, which is accompanied by a philosophical reflection of Shakspere, on the susceptibility of the vulgar to religious impressions.

> Look how the world's poor people are amazed
> At apparitions, signs, and prodigies,

> Whereon, with fearful eyes, they long have gazed,
> Infusing them with dreadful prophecies.

Cardinal Pandulph, in King John, is made to have the same opinion, and to shape his policy by it.

Thus Venus 'chides death:'—

> Why hast thou cast into eternal sleeping
> Those eyes that taught all other eyes to see?

'Nox perpetuo domienda,' as the Latin poet says of death. The sentiment of Shakspere is identical with that which prevailed amongst the leaders of the first French Revolution, and which they caused to be inscribed on the gates of the cemeteries of Paris. We may remind the reader, that Dr. Johnson severely denounces this sentiment, which is put into the mouth of the Duke in Measure for Measure.

Socrates, in his apology, speaking of death as annihilation, and the gain therefrom, says, 'since its whole time is only a long-continued night.' The same reasoning as introduced in the speech of the Duke in Measure for Measure.

THE RAPE OF LUCRECE.

With his usual ascription of inconsistency to religious professors, Shakspere makes Tarquin pray to the gods to assist him in so criminal a project as the rape of Lucrece. However, the gods are represented as not countenancing crime; and prayer does not satisfy Tarquin, any more than Hamlet's uncle.

The feeling which seems to have been portrayed in the prayer of Hamlet's uncle was the awakening of the latent moral sense. In the man merely moral, conscience would stir up a combat between right and wrong. The man under religious influence, as Hamlet's uncle, is made by Shakspere to introduce another being as umpire in the question. Shakspere there seems to insinuate, what is the use of prayer if it did not prevent wickedness?—that no Providence is exercised where necessity, in cause and effect, remains unaltered and uninfluenced by prayer. There was Shakspere's philosophy of prayer; besides the satire contained in introducing a wretch under the miserable delusion, that the Being to whom

he thought himself responsible might be affected by some of the many means superstition thinks will induce Him to be a partial judge between man and his crimes.

But we cannot understand what purpose, but ridicule of religion, it serves to represent a man going to commit a crime, and invoking heaven in its execution, though he may declare it useless. The philosophy of Shakspere seems to reappear in the comment of Tarquin, that 'effects' are the only realities, that 'thoughts are dreams,' with the irreverend sneer at the functions of religion in releasing from sin.

> Thoughts are but dreams till their effects be tried;
> The blackest sin is cleared with absolution.

Besides, we see used what Johnson calls the sophistry of Isabella, that criminal intentions are not crimes.

Lucrece utters a long reproach against 'opportunity,' by which Shakspere evidently means the circumstances which surround men, and which impel them to guilt. 'Ill annexed opportunity,' she says, 'kills virtue;' that is, unfortunate circumstances destroy virtue. It is not so much the individual's fault, as the wrong of the temptation to which he is exposed.

> Whoever plots the sin, thou point'st the season:
> 'Tis thou that spurn'st at right, at law, at reason.
>
> An accessary, by thine inclination,
> To all sins past, and all that are to come,
> From the creation to the general doom.

She then upbraids Time in the same metaphysical strain:—

> Be guilty of my death, since of my crime.

She calls opportunity 'Time's' servant, and asks why hath he—

> Cancelled my fortunes, and enchained me
> To endless date of never-ending woes?

She says 'Time's' office is—

> To eat up errors by opinion bred.

Time's glory is—

> To unmask falsehood, and bring truth to light;

* * * *

To feed oblivion with decay of things;
To blot old books, and alter their contents;
* * * *
And turn the giddy round of Fortune's wheel.

The instances cited above seem to convey a philosophical idea of time, entering more minutely into the considerations of the sceptic than of the believer. The believer thinks truth has been revealed in all ages—without it man could not, unassisted, make the discovery himself. The unbeliever looks forward to time and the progress of humanity to shape truth born in error.

Time's creative and destructive powers, of all kinds and degrees, Lucrece then mentions as essentially his, and equally balanced, and therefore asks why is there no control over Time? why what is done cannot be undone, or ruled otherwise? In all which she appears to complain of the absence of Providence and the unalterable issue of nature's laws, as she does a little further on, when she calls Time 'Tutor both of good and bad.'

She invokes Time to strike Tarquin with a guilty conscience:—

The dire thought of his committed evil
Shape every bush a hideous, shapeless devil.

As Theseus had, in the same language, and from the same cause, described the 'tricks of imagination:'—

Imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear.

Terror, however mixed in cause, producing a religion of fear, as benefits received inspire a religion of gratitude.

A long justification of suicide is put into the mouth of Lucrece, who evidently thinks more of her fame in this life than of the retribution of a future existence.

Shakspere, in his own person, says of women, they have waxen minds, easily impressed.

Then call them not the authors of their ill,
No more than wax shall be accounted evil
Wherein is stamped the semblance of a devil;

i.e., we should not blame the victim, but the operating causes,

and women's faults are the fulfilment of 'men's abuses.' Thus Shakspere plainly, as in the previous passages referring to the influence of Time and 'opportunity,' denies moral responsibility.

> Here she sheathed in her harmless breast
> A harmful knife, that thence her soul unsheathed:
> That blow did bail it from the deep unrest
> Of that polluted prison where it breathed:
> Her contrite sighs unto the clouds bequeathed
> Her winged sprite; and through her wounds doth fly
> Life's lasting date from cancelled destiny.

This stanza is perhaps the most unimpeachable testimony of Shakspere in favour of a future state. It may be well, therefore, compared with the innumerable and great majority of cases in which he has said exactly the contrary. It is full of the conceits fashionable in those times, and of the phraseology of poetry usual in speaking of death. It has none of the earnest argument and persuasion common to him, when he takes a material view of death.

That it is a poem, and not a play, we are inclined to think no argument for its delivering more authoritatively the opinion of Shakspere. The requisites of mere poetry demand more licence of the imagination. In the plays, with other critics, we have attached less sense to the rhyme and more reason to the blank verse. While the adaptation of the popular faith was more pleasing to the public, it was of easier performance to the writer, made all ready to his pen. A poem is supposed to have the reflections of its author, and therefore Shakspere, having published these pieces in his own name, and laid a claim to fame by them alone, he would naturally defer, on one occasion, to the popular impression of a scene of death.

'Life's lasting date from cancelled destiny,' is very different to a 'dateless bargain to engrossing death' in Romeo and Juliet. But in the dialogues of a play, not delivered in character by him, nor published by his authority, he might say what he liked. In a poem published by himself, he had, in person, not only to answer for what he wrote, but to propitiate the reading public.

Yet in the sonnets (XXX.), where he is supposed to speak

his own thoughts throughout, he says of himself in the first person:—

> When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
> I summon up remembrance of things past,
> I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
> And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste;
> Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
> For precious friends hid in death's dateless night.

Farther, in sonnet lxxiv., which we have quoted before, as obtaining immortality for himself among men by his works, he uses the same legal figure in denial of a future state and immortality of the soul to himself, which he asserted of Lucrece. It is said of her that the blow of the knife bailed her soul. Of his own death, he says:—

> When that fell arrest,
> Without all bail, shall carry me away.

We have accepted a spiritual interpretation of the stanza, but it might receive a material conclusion in accordance with the general views of Shakspere. It might mean no more than what he has often said of Lucrece, that whilst the properties of life resolve themselves into the elements, the act of her suicide would give her an everlasting life of fame in the records of history, and cancel the oblivion of destiny.

SONNETS.

The publisher, seeing so much about eternity—Shakspere's eternity—in these stanzas, in dedicating them to him to whom they are addressed, wishes him 'that eternity promised by our ever-living poet.'

Stanza after stanza are exhortations to a friend to have offspring, the same as those addressed by Venus to Adonis, in stanza vi.

> Then, what could death do if thou shouldst depart,
> Leaving thee living in posterity?
> Be not self-willed; for thou art much too fair
> To be death's conquest and make death thine heir.

In stanza xiii. his arguments to his friend to have posterity are those used to induce the religious to think of their souls

and immortal life, while he is affirming that life is material and death eternal.

> O that you were yourself; but, love, you are
> No longer yours, that you yourself here live.

Here is an end to all identity in a future state. Therefore, he adds, he should prepare for this coming end by giving his semblance to some other, that there should be 'no determination of that which he holds in lease,' but himself should be again after his own decease, upheld in honour against the 'barren rage of death's eternal cold.'

In stanza xiv. he says he does not pluck judgment from the stars, tell fortunes, predict changes; but, from his friend's eyes, he prognosticates that if he does not renew himself in posterity—

> Thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date.

Stanza xv. again might be the preaching of an apostle on the insignificance of human life, only wanting the moral of it to be pointed to a future state, instead of the ever-recurring advice to his friend to perpetuate his species.

The substance of it stongly resembles the speech of Prospero on the world and mankind, shewing no more lasting reality than the shows which had passed away conjured by his magic wand.

> When I consider everything that grows
> Holds in perfection but a little moment;
> That this huge state presenteth nought but shows,
> Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
> When I perceive that men, as plants, increase,
> Cheered and checked even by the selfsame sky,
> Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
> And wear their brave state out of memory;
> Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
> Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
> Where wasteful time debateth with decay,
> To change your day of youth to sullied night;
> And all in war with time for love of you,
> As he takes from you, I ingraft you new.

In stanza xviii. he says expressly that the boast of death is that he shall wander in his shade, but his lines confer an eternity which death cannot take away. Here

again the language is religious, and the eternity we have spoken of, as the only one acknowledged by Shakspere, is fame rescuing from oblivion.

> Nor shall death brag thou wanderest in his shade,
> When in eternal lines to time thou growest,
> So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
> So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

The prophecy—boastful though true, not reverential of religion, and by some not thought moral considering to whom it is addressed—is followed up in the next stanza (xix.)

> Yet, do thy worst, old Time: despite thy wrong,
> My love shall in my verse ever live young.

If the above two stanzas were questionable on the points mentioned, addressed to a man, the next (xx.) seems unmistakable in its impropriety of sentiment and language.

Stanza xxx. is the stanza that speaks of—

> Precious friends hid in death's dateless night.

Stanza xxxi. says:—

> How many a holy and obsequious tear
> Hath dear religious love stolen from mine eye.

These expressions in the above two stanzas, be it remembered, he puts forth as feelings which he has experienced, but are now quite lost in the love of his friend. Just as we shall hereafter find him introducing religion as of no consequence in comparison with love, but merely to set off the strength, the overpowering influence of his passion.

Stanza xxxiv. seems to make ideas connected with Christianity the illustration of provocation and reconciliation between himself and his love.

> The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
> To him that bears the strong offence's cross.
> Ah! but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds;
> And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.

In stanza xlii. the principal object of the above idea, having the same application, seems again introduced:—

> And both for my sake lay on me this cross.

Perhaps no author puts religion under greater contribution to

serve mundane purposes than Shakspere. The conclusion is always most opposite to the commencement, and the idea is turned apparently without eliciting a sentiment of devotion in the poet.

Stanza lv. exhibits a more complex association of ideas. It begins in a most material strain, and in a laudation of his 'rhyme,' borrowed from Horace; but ends in an illustration drawn apparently from a religious idea:—

> Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
> Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
> Gainst death and all oblivious enmity
> Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
> Even in the eyes of all posterity,
> That wear this world out to the ending doom.
> So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
> You live in this, and dwell in lover's eyes.

In the wonderful fertility of Shakspere's ideas on this subject, this is the first and only one to be met with that seems to imply by word the possibility of a judgment hereafter. The only wonder is that he has never before alluded to it—who seems to have made every subject subservient to his poetry, and a compliment to the idol of his verse. Here it seems introduced to shew the perpetuity of his poetry—devoted to eternizing the memory of his friend, which was to last as long as the world remained, unless by his reappearance the object of this extravagant admiration could be seen himself, which would render his encomiums and the monument he had raised to him a work of supererogation. A very fine compliment; but if a religious idea, making rather an irreligious use of it. It must, however, be admitted, that the idea involved in the sentence, 'till the judgment thus yourself arise,' is very ambiguous, and hardly susceptible of a clear and definite meaning.

It is putting a common religious phrase to very reprehensible purpose, when he begins the lviii. stanza:—

> That God forbid, that made me first your slave,
> I should in thought control your times of pleasure.

To think that God made him the slave of another man, and gave such an idol to such suspicious worship, or that he providentially interfered in the mental exercise of such love,

appears to be little short of impiety. It is of a similar character with the other illustrations from religion, such as the judgment just before mentioned, which was apparently introduced to point out the resurrection of another attraction (the object of his affections) than that generally supposed to be the attention of that awful day.

At the end of stanza lviii., with his usual levity and irreverence, he compares waiting for his friend to 'hell.'

> I am to wait, though waiting so be hell,
> Not blame your pleasure, be it ill or well.

The stanzas continue their material reflections on the state of things, which would add to the 'vanity of vanities' pictured by Solomon. But the moral appended to them by Shakspere has no reference to a higher and more stable existence beyond the grave; he merely gives a comparison of the immortality of his own verse, and the superiority of the object of his own idolatry.

We before observed the assimilation of his sentiment of love to religion. Stanza cv., and many following, pursue the amatory-religious idea in combined association. Here he begins by asserting that his love is not idolatry, because addressed to an attribute acceded by orthodoxy to divinity.

> Let not my love be called idolatry,
> Nor my beloved as an idle show,
> Since all alike my songs and praises be,
> To one, of one, still such, and ever so.

This seems a mixture of the Nicene and doxology—'God of God,' &c., and 'as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.' He then proceeds to make of him a trinity in unity, that the parallel to the triune-religion may be complete.

> Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,
> Still constant in a wond'rous excellence,
> Therefore my verse, to constancy confined,
> One thing expressing, leaves out difference.
> Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument;
> Fair kind, and true, varying to other words:
> And in this change is my invention spent,
> Three themes in one, which wond'rous scope affords.
> Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone;
> Which three, till now, never kept seat in one.

What does the reader, from the above specimen, think of Shakspere's reverential mind? The theology already given leads him, in the next stanza (cvi.), to descend still further into the details of religion:—

So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring;
And, for they look'd but with divining eyes,
They had not skill enough your worth to sing:
For we, which now behold these present days,
Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

He says (stanza cviii.) there is nothing in the round of thought and speech which he has not made tributary to express his love or the merit of his friend. Nothing, we may say, however sacred. He continues these irreverend parallels: —

But yet, like prayers divine,
I must each day say o'er the very same;
Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,
Even as when first I hallow'd thy fair name.

And he ends by saying only love is eternal.

In stanza cix. he says he could not be faithless to his love, because his soul was part of himself. Whilst he introduces the religious symbol of water washing out the stain of any departure from his idol, he speaks of it as any other man would of his God:—

Never believe, though in my nature reigned
All frailties that besige all kinds of blood,
That it could so preposterously be stained,
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good;
For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou, my rose; in it thou art my all.

In stanza cx. he proceeds to call his friend a god, and introduces an equivocal qualification to the irreverend riot of his theological love:—

Mine appetite I never more will grind
On newer proof, to try an older friend,
A god in love, to whom I am confined.
Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,
Even to thy pure and most loving breast

Here at last is an acknowledgment of something superior to his love, more we take it for the sake of variety of sense and rhyme than his reason. No poet can resist the requirements of his verse. The exceptions in the poet, as we before said, must be judged of by the rule—by the majority of cases, and the weight of probability, in the comparison of them, must strike the balance to which the opinion of the author inclines. Of course, where the sentiment is against public opinion, it is additional evidence that it was irresistibly his own expression of mind; where it conforms more suitably to received opinion, allowance must be made for a more powerful external circumstance operating upon him.

Stanza cxi. is a famous one, in which Shakspere is supposed to lament his being reduced to the necessity of appearing on the stage, or writing for the theatre. He ascribes it to fortune, not to Providence—

> The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds;

and speaks of his nature, 'subdued by his work,' as of one in a mechanical trade, conformably to the material doctrine of circumstances creating the human character.

In stanza cxv.—speaking of his own love, which, when it said it loved best, spoke an untruth, because in the future it could love better—he delivers himself materially on the effects of time:—

> But reckoning time, whose million'd accidents
> Creep in twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,
> Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,
> Divert strong minds to the course of altering things.

In stanza cxlvi. the poet addresses his 'poor soul' in the usual language of religion, urging the superior importance of attending to the interests of the soul, instead of being engrossed by the cares and affections of the body. But though he introduces this language, he does not seem to adopt it, or to be impressed by it, for he immediately proceeds, in his usual strain, on the intensity of his passion for the object of his affection, which sets all reason and admonition at defiance.

We here conclude our commentary on the sonnets. Armitage Brown, in stating that Shakspere has been asserted to

be Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Deist, adduces, as proof of his belief in the immortality of the soul, stanza cxlvi. This he confesses to be the sole evidence of Shakspere's 'strong faith in the immortality of the soul,' but which, compared with the context we have put before the reader, we consider no evidence at all. It must be confessed that sonnets of such a nature as those we have been examining, are a most unfortunate source from which to derive a man's religious sentiments. Of these sonnets Hallam has justly said, that, for Shakspere's sake, he wishes they had never seen the light—not from any critical estimate of the poetry, but from consideration of the subject.

All the conclusion we can gather, from the introduction of religion in the sonnets, is what he makes a person say in the 'Lover's Complaint:'—

Religious love puts out Religion's eye.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS.

P. 1. *According to Anthony Wood.* This antiquarian likens Marlowe, in his atheism, to Étienne Jodelle, a French dramatic writer, who lived in the age of Rabelais and other suspected atheists, amongst whom, at one time, he became an object of devotion. The line of infidelity is therefore regularly made out, through Jodelle, Marlowe, to Shakspere; and we derived, as has happened since, our sentiments of irreligion, if not our drama, from our neighbours. In going back again from Shakspere to Rabelais, we can trace identity of mind and manners between our poet and the French philosopher. Shakspere possessed much of the spirit of Pantagruelism—the ridicule of what is serious. Amongst other death-bed railleries attributed to Rabelais, the reply to the inquiry how he was, that he was going to seek the great Perhaps, bears a resemblance to some Shaksperianisms, particularly the dialogue between the Gaoler and Posthumus. The same humour, seen even in the epitaph of Shakspere, held paramount sway over their minds to the last; and both are charged with having died inebriated. Jacob Bibliophile says Rabelais made Molière, so that some connection between the former and our greatest dramatic writer, if only in the spirit of the age in which they both lived, does not seem improbable.

P. 2. *Dead shepherd! now I find thy saw of might;*
Whoever lov'd, that lov'd not at first sight?

'There is an evident feeling of regard in these lines, a looking back to the melancholy end of that imprudent and unhappy man.'—Hunter's New Illustrations of Shakspere, vol. I., p. 337.

P. 14. *It is traditioned.* Both Hunter and Halliwell are inclined to believe in the truth of the tradition preserved by the Vicar of Stratford.—P. 84, vol. I. of Hunter's Illustrations; p. 284 of Halliwell's Life.

P. 16. *Good friend, for Jesus' sake,* etc. The pious and reverential tone of the epitaphs in the church to the rest of the Shakspere family contrast singularly with this *jeu d'esprit* of the poet. Halli-

well, in his Life of Shakspere, on an incident mentioned giving rise to the question of his being religious in his latter days, says, 'most direct testimony is against such an opinion.' The epitaph to his daughter, Halliwell declares, 'implies to the contrary.' This epitaph reports of her that, though she inherited his wit, she did not get her religion from her father, which secured her salvation.

Mr. Hunter, in his New Illustrations of Shakspere, seems to think that the little we know of Shakspere arises from the aversion his posterity had, in a religious point of view, to the memory of the dead. He himself says, 'But still, if we may believe what his contemporaries have related of him, or if we read his own writings, we shall find there was a license admitted by him which does not easily admit of defence, and which was unsuitable, at least, to the character of one for whom it is claimed that he was the religious man.'—Hunter, vol. I., p. 106. Again: 'His greatest admirers will think that he may have gone too far; and there are, in his plays, passages which nothing can fully excuse.'—Vol. I., p. 114.

P. 40. We were in error in supposing that Mr. Knight, in his note on the 'mastick jaws' of Thersites, conceived that Shakspere intended to allude to the Histriomastix of Prynne. On the contrary, Mr. Knight referred to the author of the Satiromastix published in 1610, as compared by Shakspere, in Troilus and Cressida, to Thersites.

P. 152. In the original copy of Hamlet, 1603, the prince is introduced reading a book, when he delivers his speech. Hunter, on Hamlet, vol. II., p. 243, says this book was Cardanus's Comforte. Chambers, in his Biographical Dictionary, says of Cardanus, 'He has been accused of impiety, and even of atheism.' The comfort insisted upon in the book was death; and Cardanus is supposed to have made himself the example of his doctrines by putting an end to his own existence. The preference given by him to death over life, and other passages, are similar to those in the speech. The following not only applies to Hamlet, but to the sentiment of the Clown in Measure for Measure. Speaking of the sleep of death, he says, 'Most assured it is that such sleeps are most sweet as be most sound, for those are the best wherein, like unto dead men, we dream nothing.'

P. 152. *The undiscovered country, from whose bourn*
No traveller returns,—puzzles the will.

In Dodsley's Old Plays, vol. II., p. 403, Edward II. of Marlowe, Mortimer, jun., says—

'Farewell, fair Queen, weep not for Mortimer,
That scorns the world, and, as a traveller,
Goes to discover countries yet unknown.'

Socrates, according to Plato, in his apology before the judges, gives the original of 'To be or not to be.' On the question of annihilation, in words and sentiment, they concur. Thus Socrates begins:—'One of these two things must be true; either death is a

privation of thought, or it is the soul's passage from one place to another. If it be a privation of thought, and, as 'twere, a peaceable sleep undisturbed by dreams, then to die is a great gain.'

If the reader will turn to the passage, too long here to be introduced, he will see, particularly in the first part of the dilemma, still further similarities to the speech of Hamlet. But on the question of a future state, instead of putting the second branch of Socrates' dilemma, that death is still more to be desired if a transition to heaven, Shakspere throws a doubt over any hereafter, and only contemplates its belief and possibility as being a state where they may be worse off than they are here. Shakspere puts the first question as the only desirable state, and the other alternative as merely preventing us enjoying the gain of annihilation. Socrates is for, Shakspere is against, conscience or religion involved in the immortality of the soul. The commentator on the Apology has thought it necessary to defend Socrates against the charge of calling in question the immortality of the soul; but if objected to in Socrates, cannot it be proved to a certainty in this instance of Shakspere?

In Goethe's celebrated criticism on Hamlet, the conclusion come to, on the philosophy of the play, is declared to be not favourable to religion. Fate is enunciated by Wilhelm Meister to be the principle of the play. He says, 'Neither earthly nor infernal thing may bring about what is reserved for fate alone. The hour of judgment comes; the bad falls with the good; one race is mowed away that another may spring up.' After a pause, in which they looked at one another, Serlo said, 'You pay no excessive compliment to Providence in thus exalting Shakspere.'

P. 132. The illustrative extract is taken from the Essay on the Tragedy of Hamlet, by P. Macdonnell, M.D.

P. 228. *It is to be like God to show mercy.* Hunter, in his New Illustrations of Shakspere, vol. 1., p. 328, says of this idea of mercy —'It was, however, one of the common-places of the time, and might no doubt be found in innumerable writers.' This remark will be found applicable to all the religious sentiments found in Shakspere, few as they are.

P. 502. Timon of Athens. 'He (Shakspere) seems also to have been acquainted with Lucian's dialogue. * * There is something approaching to characteristic difference between this play and the rest; a kind of *coldness*, so to speak; a sardonic touch, unlike Shakspere's natural turn of mind; something which reminds of Lucian.' —Hunter.

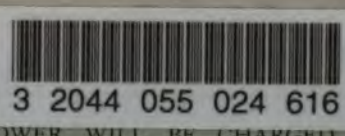
Page 96, line 25, after 'Besides' read *he has*. Page 207, line 27, for 'humour' read *human*, Page 228, line 2, for 'often' read *before*. Page 271, line 9, for 'she' read *he*. Page 301, line 1, for 'persons' read *person'd*. Page 326, line 35, for 'here' read *have*, Page 332, the last paragraph concludes the preceding play. Page 483, lines 16 and 19, for 'cura' read *curæ*.









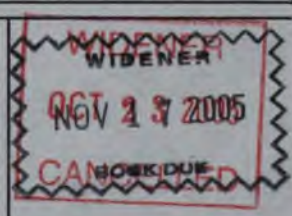


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